

[Press release: Foreign Secretary appoints new Independent Governors of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy](#)

The Foreign Secretary has appointed Thomas Hughes and Susan English as Independent Governors of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Boris Johnson has appointed Thomas Hughes and Susan English as Independent Governors of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. They succeed departing Independent Governors Ken Caldwell and Bronwen Manby.

Thomas Hughes has been the Executive Director at Article 19 since 2013 and brings with him a long history of working on human rights in a number of organisations, and the experience of implementing an international human rights strategy. Sue English was most recently the Head of Political Programmes at the BBC, following an established career at a number of news networks, and brings with her deep experience of British politics and of democracy abroad.

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy was established in 1992 as an arms-length non-departmental public body. It is run independently of the UK Government though works closely with it. The Foundation's vision is the establishment of legitimate and effective multi-party representative democracy.

Further information

[News story: New Commissioner for the Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

Lord Shinkwin appointed Commissioner for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) by Equalities Minister Justine Greening.

On 21 April 2017 the Minister for Women and Equalities Justine Greening confirmed her decision to appoint Lord Shinkwin as the new Commissioner for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). Lord Kevin Shinkwin has taken up his appointment from 21 April 2017 and the appointment is for a

period of 4 years.

The EHRC is Great Britain's designated equality body and 'A-rated' national human rights institution. Lord Shinkwin takes over from Lord Chris Holmes who was previously the EHRC Disability Commissioner. Lord Shinkwin will assist the EHRC to fulfil its role as the country's expert body on equality and human rights issues.

Lord Shinkwin has lived with a severe disability since birth and has worked to tackle disability discrimination throughout his career. This includes his work at the Royal National Institute for Deaf People, Macmillan Cancer Support, Cancer Research UK, The Royal British Legion and the House of Lords, where he has sat as a Life Peer on the Conservative Benches since November 2015. Lord Shinkwin also introduced a Private Member's Bill on disability equality to tackle legal and lethal disability discrimination before birth.

[Speech: Queen's Birthday Party 2017 in Tirana](#)

“Zoti Kryetar i Parlamentit, Ministra, Shkëlqesi, zonja dhe zotërinj Kam kënaqësinë t’ju mikpres në ditën tonë kombëtare në të cilën festojmë ditëlindjen e nëntëdhjetë-e-një të Madhërisë së Saj, Mbretëreshës. Shpresoj që shqipfolësit mes nesh të më falin që po e vazhdoj fjalimin tim të shkurtër në anglisht.”

As many of you will know the Queen's official birthday is in June but this year we are celebrating her real birthday which is on 21 April. The Queen was born 91 years ago in 1926, just 14 years after the birth of Albania, and she has ruled for 55 years. Her Majesty is a symbol of continuity in a changing world.

Queen's Birthday Party 2017 in Tirana

This has been a year of change for the UK. Here in Albania not only have we changed the date we are celebrating our national day but we have also changed our Ambassador! Back in Britain the people have voted for a rather bigger change, deciding last June that we would leave the European Union. This will mean even more change for the UK as we move to a different relationship with our European friends and partners. Some things will change. But much will not.

Our Prime Minister, Theresa May, is fond of saying that we are leaving the EU not Europe. This remains our continent and its peace, security and stability will remain just as important to us in two years time as it has done in the past and does today. Our foreign interests will not diminish with Brexit but increase. We will see the UK take a more, not less active role in the World.

This is particularly true of our engagement with the Western Balkans, which remains an area of real importance to the UK and is especially true of our engagement with Albania.

Queen's Birthday Party 2017 in Tirana

This year, we will double the number of British diplomats in Tirana. This big increase in staff is partly to help us work more closely with the government of Albania to tackle the threat from organised crime but it is also a reflection of the broadening of our relationship. For example, from next month we will have a resident Defence attaché here in Tirana for the first time in more than a decade. This is a reflection of our close defence relations which last year saw further training for British troops in Albania and this year sees our two armed forces working together as part of NATO's very high readiness forces.

The British Council is also increasing its presence in Albania and continues to bring to Albania the best of UK culture and education. The British Council has also been active helping to reform higher education and the university accreditation process. All of this shows that our relationship with Albania is both deep and wide. Albania matters to the UK.

We want an Albania with which we can work together as partners. One with a strong, fair, justice system and one where the politicians work to find solutions not to create problems. We want to see an Albania that promotes political dialogue rather than political confrontation. We want to see an Albania on the path to membership of the European Union. We want to see a successful and prosperous Albania.

I should like to end with just a few words of thanks to those who have made this evening possible. Thank you to our sponsors. Thank you to my excellent, and expanding staff at the Embassy and thank you to my wife Kerry for all her support.

Which leads me to the toast. It is traditional that we have just one toast which is to the Queen. So please raise your glasses to toast Her Majesty "the Queen."

[News story: Innovate UK appointments confirmed](#)

The appointments of Gerard Grech, Priya Guha and Simon Devonshire have been confirmed today (21 April 2017) by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Innovate UK finds and drives science and technology opportunities that will

grow the UK's economy – delivering productivity, new jobs and exports and keeping the country globally competitive in the race for future prosperity.

The board regularly reviews the management and performance of Innovate UK and ensures the organisation delivers its strategic priorities and that resource is allocated effectively in the delivery of these objectives.

Gerard Grech is currently the chief executive officer of Tech City UK.

Priya Guha is Ecosystem General Manager of RocketSpace, a London start-up space. Priya was a UK diplomat for 20 years, with her most recent post being British Consul General to San Francisco.

Simon Devonshire OBE is co-founder of Talent Cupboard and was Entrepreneur in Residence at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

These appointments have been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments. The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

[News story: Appointment of Alan Wood as a member of the Youth Justice Board](#)

Alan Wood was the Chair of the Youth Custody Improvement Board (YCIB), which was set up to explore and report on the current state of the youth custodial estate, and recommend how the system could be improved, particularly focusing on current risks to safety and wellbeing. The Board recently published its final report and made a number of recommendations as to how the system could be improved. Many of those recommendations are reflected in our plans to reform the youth justice sector, in which the YJB will play a key role.

As Chair of the YCIB, Alan Wood was charged with identifying the most serious issues in the youth justice system, and is therefore key to ensuring those reforms address them. His past experience including in a number of senior management positions in youth and social care roles makes him particularly well suited to this role, both in terms of his leadership experience and his subject matter expertise.

Under the Governance Code on Public Appointments, which came into effect on 1 January this year, ministers can, in exceptional circumstances, make an appointment without a competition. The Secretary of State has decided to appoint Mr Wood as a Member of the YJB on these terms and, in accordance with the Code, have consulted the Commissioner for Public Appointments, who has accepted the decision.