

Appointment of the Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 2022

Press release

The Queen has approved the following appointment.



The Queen has approved that The Right Honourable Lord (Patrick) Hodge be appointed as Her Majesty's Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 2022.

Notes for editors

The Lord High Commissioner is the Sovereign's personal representative to the Annual General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. He attends the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on behalf of the Sovereign. He makes the opening and closing addresses to the Assembly, and carries out a number of official functions as the Lord High Commissioner.

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UK engineering firm powers wind farms and jobs with government support

- ODE has transformed over the last 20 years, broadening its business into renewables and now supporting the wider energy transition
- To help it secure a substantial offshore wind farm project in Poland, the Wimbledon-based business secured a €900,000 package financed by HSBC

UK with support from UK Export Finance

- HSBC UK and UKEF's support provided working capital benefit by bridging the cash flow gap caused by contractual milestones
- The funding enabled ODE to expand its footprint in Europe. The project's success has secured a pipeline of further offshore wind farm projects

A Wimbledon-based engineering firm secured a major contract to design an offshore wind farm in Poland, backed by €900,000 finance from HSBC UK (split between a guarantee and export loan facility). HSBC UK's facility is back by an 80% guarantee from UK Export Finance (UKEF).

Offshore Design Engineering Ltd.'s (ODE) business has transformed with renewables now forming a large proportion of its work. The loan enabled ODE to maximise working capital efficiencies, grow its multi-million pound export pipeline and supply one of Poland's biggest offshore wind farms, set to provide clean electricity to up to one million Polish households.

Andrew Baker, Managing Director at ODE, commented:

The UKEF support has been really important, allowing us to expand our resources and move into different markets at the same time. The ability to take what we've learned in the offshore industry in the UK, and help other countries to do that, is very meaningful and I'm proud of the momentum we have achieved so far.

ODE's engineers and project managers help design the wind farms and then assist in their development, from conception to commissioning. Its core export markets are Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, Germany, France, the USA, Poland, and Vietnam.

For one major overseas project, the Baltic Power offshore wind farm to the north of the Polish coastline, ODE was required to provide a performance bond in a short timeframe – which had cashflow impacts for the growing business.

After approaching HSBC UK and UKEF for support, ODE was able to secure the contract, accessing the financing it needed under UKEF's [General Export Facility \(GEF\)](#). ODE has since become established in Poland with a number of additional renewable scopes being won in the country.

The business now has a multi-million level pipeline, with the flexibility provided by the GEF allowing ODE to pitch for larger contracts both in Poland and in new markets around the world.

Richard Armstrong, Export Finance Manager at UK Export Finance, said:

ODE is a prime example of a business that is exporting UK expertise to champion the green energy transition around the world. As we enter 2022 taking forward the recommendations made at COP26, I'm delighted that we could provide this support and hope other businesses will recognise similar potential.

[UK Statement on Further Economic Sanctions Targeted at the Central Bank of the Russian Federation](#)

News story

Today the UK government has announced its intention to take further restrictive economic measures in response to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, by targeting the Central Bank of the Russian Federation (CBR).



Following already announced sanctions measures aimed at imposing severe consequences on Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Russian economy, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in coordination with the Governor of the Bank of England, today announces the UK Government's intention to take further restrictive economic measures in response to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia by targeting the Central Bank of the Russian Federation (CBR). This action is taken in concert with the US and the European Union, to prevent the CBR from deploying its foreign reserves in ways that undermine the impact of sanctions imposed by us and our allies, and to undercut its ability to engage in foreign exchange transactions to support the Russian rouble.

The UK Government will immediately take all necessary steps to bring into effect restrictions to prohibit any UK natural or legal persons from undertaking financial transactions involving the CBR, the Russian National Wealth Fund, and the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation. The UK Government intends to make further related designations this week, working alongside our international partners.

The Chancellor said:

These measures demonstrate our determination to apply severe economic sanctions in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. We are announcing this action in rapid coordination with our US and European allies to move in lock step once more with our international partners, to demonstrate our steadfast resolve in imposing the highest costs on Russia and to cut her off from the international financial system so long as this conflict persists.

The Governor of the Bank of England said:

The Bank of England continues to take any and all actions needed to support the Government's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We welcome the steps taken today by the UK Government, in coordination with EU and US authorities, as an important and powerful demonstration of the UK's commitment to the international rule of law.

Background for media

New sanctions measures will cover:

- Restrictions to prohibit UK persons from undertaking financial transactions involving the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, the Russian National Wealth Fund, and the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation.
- Restrictions against Russian financial institutions.
- Measures to prevent Russian companies from issuing transferable securities and money market instruments in the UK. This will form a sweeping addition to existing financial restrictions. This is in addition to the prohibition of the Russian state raising sovereign debt in the UK already announced.
- A power to prevent designated banks from accessing Sterling and clearing payments through the UK. This will match the power the US already has. Banks subject to this measure will be unable to process any payments through the UK or have access to UK financial markets.
- A set of measures to strengthen significantly our trade restrictions against Russia. This will include a prohibition against the export of a range of high-end and critical technical equipment and components in sectors including electronics, telecommunications, and aerospace.
- The previously announced extension of financial and trade measures

applying to Crimea to the DNR and LNR regions.

- Any General Licences related to sanctions will be published on OFSI's pages [here](#).

Our package of sanctions, the strongest economic measures the UK has ever enacted against Russia, will inflict devastating consequences on President Vladimir Putin and Russia:

- Sanctions will devastate Russia's economy and targets Vladimir Putin directly and his inner circle including Sergey Lavrov.
- More than 100 companies and oligarchs at the heart of Putin's regime have been hit with sanctions worth 100s of billions of pounds, asset freezes and travel bans.
- Hit Russia's banking and defence sector hard; asset freezes on VTB, Russia's second largest bank, worth £154 billion, Rostec, Russia's defence giant, responsible for \$13bn of arms exports per year. Sanctions will also soon be implemented on 571 members of the Duma and Federation council who sanctioned the invasion of Ukraine.
- We have banned Aeroflot and all other Russian commercial and private jets from UK airspace.
- This is not the end. We are working in lock step with allies to go further and exclude Russian banks from the SWIFT financial system.
- We will introduce new financial measures to freeze the assets of Russian banks and lay legislation before Parliament to ban the Russian state and Russia's economically vital industries and companies from raising finance on the UK's money markets – the most important financial centre in Europe.
- Working with allies, we will cripple Russia's economic development in both the short and long term. The UK and our allies are united and clear that nothing and no one is off the table.
- UK sanctions will also apply to Belarussian individuals and organisations that have supported the Russian invasion.

Find out more about the UK's sanctions relating to Russia [here](#).

You can also view the full [UK sanctions list](#).

Millions of people with rare diseases to benefit from faster diagnosis and better access to treatment

- New technology and digital tools will support faster diagnosis, and improvements to virtual consultations will make it easier for patients to see multiple specialists at once
- Action plan developed with the NHS and rare disease community

Millions of people with rare diseases will benefit from faster diagnosis and new treatments following the launch today of England's first Rare Diseases Action Plan by Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid.

There are more than 7,000 rare diseases, affecting an estimated 3.5 million people in the UK. Their complex nature means it is difficult for healthcare professionals to receive training on every condition or for patients to access the relevant specialist.

People living with rare diseases, such as muscular dystrophies or Huntington's disease, can go through multiple appointments and referrals before a diagnosis is made due to the complexity of conditions, making it difficult for individuals and their families to coordinate their care.

The action plan, published today, includes 16 commitments to further improve care and has been developed in partnership with NHS England and NHS Improvement, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, Health Education England, Genomics England, the National Institute for Health Research, NHS Digital and the Medical Research Council.

Drawing on the UK's strengths as a global leader in science, the Action Plan includes commitments on research, including an announcement of £40 million of new funding to the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) BioResource, to further their work in characterising and understanding rare diseases.

The Action Plan will also help increase the ability to spot genetic conditions during the screening of newborn babies.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

"This action plan will speed up diagnoses and care and allow our fantastic workforce to better support patients, by drawing upon the UK's world-leading science and technology.

"I am committed to levelling up our health system so that everyone regardless

of their condition can receive treatment that is tailored to their needs.”

Actions include:

- Improvements to newborn screening so diagnoses can be made earlier, including a new research pilot using whole genome sequencing to screen for rare genetic conditions in healthy newborns, and improvements to the way the UK National Screening Committee makes decisions on rare diseases
- A new digital tool called ‘GeNotes’, which will allow healthcare professionals to quickly access information on rare diseases to improve diagnosis so they can provide the right care for their patients
- Developing a toolkit for virtual consultations to increase the effectiveness of videoconference and telephone clinic calls, making it easier for patients to coordinate care between multiple specialists without the need to travel long distances
- Supporting access to new treatments through new programmes like the Innovative Medicines Fund, while continuing to work with NICE on new treatments being assessed.
- Monitoring uptake of drugs for patients with rare diseases to, by measuring the number of people accessing a drug and comparing with the number expected to access it, to ensure equal access to treatment across the country
- Pilot new approaches to care for patients with undiagnosed rare conditions. Following consultation with rare disease patients and their families, these pilots are currently under design, but examples could include a holistic one-stop paediatric clinic or a more targeted adult neurology clinic, or the use of virtual expert multidisciplinary teams.

The government will also continue investing in the development of nucleic acid therapies, for example, through the world-class Gene Therapy Innovation Hubs and the Nucleic Acid Therapy Accelerator.

Minister for Patient Safety and Primary Care, Maria Caulfield said:

“People with rare diseases deserve the best care and treatment. Marking Rare Disease Day 2022 by publishing England’s first Rare Diseases Action Plan is a significant step in supporting people with rare diseases to access even better coordinated care and treatment.

“We have listened carefully to people living with rare diseases to make sure their needs and priorities are placed at the heart of this plan. We will continue to work closely with the rare disease community over the coming year to develop this even further.”

Prof. Lucy Chappell, Chief Executive of the National Institute for Health Research said:

“Around one in 17 people will develop a rare disease at some point in their lives, so while they are individually rare, cumulatively these diseases affect a substantial proportion of the population. The impacts on these individuals and their families are wide-ranging. Our research needs to continue to address early diagnosis, effective treatments and supporting them

to live well with their conditions.

“The work of the NIHR’s BioResource has already helped produce some truly ground-breaking discoveries, such as those made through the 100,000 Genomes Project, and today’s significant new investment will ensure it remains at the cutting edge of the fight to understand rare diseases, and help the people who have them.”

Nick Meade, Director of Policy of Genetic Alliance UK said:

“Rare Disease Day is great timing for this step forward. The delivery of this plan despite the challenges of the current environment shows the commitment of the delivery partners to make meaningful progress.

“Our community’s voice has been heard more than ever in the development of this plan. This collaboration has helped us see how well these priorities of diagnosis, awareness, coordination and care can combine to have an impact greater than the sum of their parts. We are excited to move into the implementation phase and to see real improvements for people living with rare conditions.”

Professor Dame Sue Hill, Chief Scientific Officer for England, said:

“With genetics playing a role in over 80% of all rare diseases, genomics can be vital in delivering faster and more accurate diagnoses, as well as more effective treatments. The NHS Genomic Medicine Service is therefore key to helping more patients get the right treatment quicker and supporting this new action plan.

“The NHS already tests for more than 360 rare and inherited signs of illness covering around 3,200 rare diseases and 203 cancers through our National Genomic Test Directory, and despite the pandemic, has continued to secure new, innovative and life-changing medicines to help people with rare and genetic conditions, including one-shot gene therapies, transforming their lives.”

This follows the UK Rare Diseases Framework announced last year which set out priorities for all four nations to speed up diagnosis, raise awareness and improve treatment and care.

The devolved administrations will publish their own action plans by the end of 2022.

[PM call with President Zelenskyy: 27](#)

February 2022

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to Ukrainian President Zelenskyy this evening.



The Prime Minister spoke to Ukrainian President Zelenskyy again this evening.

The Prime Minister lauded the bravery of the Ukrainian people following the Russian invasion and praised the leadership of President Zelenskyy in the face of such adversity.

The resistance of the Ukrainian people was heroic, the Prime Minister added.

President Zelenskyy said he believed the next 24 hours was a crucial period for Ukraine, and the Prime Minister said he would do all he could to help ensure defensive aid from the UK and allies reached Ukraine.

The leaders agreed to continue to stay in close contact and the Prime Minister reiterated the UK's staunch support for Ukraine's sovereignty.

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