

Press release: UK offers solidarity and support after Notre-Dame fire

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Bells will be rung at churches and cathedrals across England in solidarity with France following the devastating fire at Notre-Dame cathedral, the Prime Minister said today.

Experts from Historic England are coordinating with colleagues across the UK heritage sector to make an offer of support to their French counterparts once the damage has been assessed.

Notre-Dame is one of the most beautiful buildings in the world – a symbol of France and the French people, and cherished across the globe. The images of destruction we saw last night were truly heart-rending.

To underline our solidarity with France and her people, the bells at Westminster Abbey will toll at 5:43pm this evening to mark the moment the fire began yesterday.

And later this week, on Maundy Thursday, bells will ring at cathedrals and churches across England.

President Macron has pledged to rebuild the cathedral and I have conveyed to him that the UK will support this endeavour however we can.

As we saw last night in the swift and heroic action of the first responders, France has huge professionalism in dealing with emergencies of this kind. I pay tribute to the firefighters and all those involved.

When it comes to the task of rebuilding, French craftsmen and women are among the finest in the world. As they prepare to embark on this daunting task, we stand ready to offer any UK experience and expertise that could be helpful in the work that lies ahead to restore this magnificent cathedral.

Press release: Special constable who terrorised family friends jailed

A former Leicestershire Police Special Constable who threatened to burn down a family's house has had his sentence increased after intervention by the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP.

Shahib Asan, 23, engaged in a lengthy course of threatening conduct towards former family friends. This included sending threatening letters and text messages to members of the family. CCTV footage from a neighbour also captured him throwing paint stripper over a member of the family's car.

Once under investigation, Asan claimed the messages were sent by someone who hacked his computer and took other elaborate steps to incriminate him, including planting his fingerprints on the threatening letters. While on bail awaiting trial, Asan sent further threatening messages to the father of the family, which he then again tried to claim were written by the 'hacker' who had framed him.

Asan was originally sentenced to a total of 12 months' imprisonment, suspended for 2 years, for offences including harassment and perverting the course of justice. The Court of Appeal has today increased that to an immediate custodial sentence of 4 years and 9 months.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General said:

"The original sentence handed down was, in my view, unduly lenient. I hope the offender's immediate imprisonment gives some comfort to the family who were harassed and lived under the threat of violence for a sustained period."

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News story: Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster meets Speaker Pelosi

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, David Lidington, hosted the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, at Lancaster House on 15 April 2019.

Speaker Pelosi was joined by eight members of the Ways and Means Committee, where they discussed the latest developments with the UK's departure from the EU, maintaining the integrity of the union of the United Kingdom, and the close economic and security partnership between the UK and the US.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, David Lidington, said:

I was delighted to welcome Speaker Pelosi and members of the Ways and Means Committee to London today. It is essential that the UK and the US continue to build upon our shared values and ambitions, paving the way for a future Free Trade Agreement and continuing our cooperation as security partners of choice.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi said:

The United Kingdom and the United States share a deep and special bond of friendship. We were honoured to meet with Deputy Prime Minister, David Lidington, for a discussion on the next steps and direction of Brexit, where we affirmed the US commitment to the Good Friday Accords and peace in Northern Ireland.