

# Speech: Her Royal Highness The Countess of Wessex addresses the UN General Assembly

Thank you, Madam President. Thank you, Chair.

Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a privilege to be here today to join such an inspiring group of women, especially the young women leaders, to consider the crucial issues of Gender Equality and women's empowerment.

I am delighted to have this opportunity to share our understanding of the barriers that hinder women's participation and leadership – and to discuss what actions we can take to bring down these barriers. We have a responsibility to ensure that women have every opportunity to reach the highest levels of their profession and lead across political, economic and social spheres. In the societies we live in today, there is no excuse not to include women. As I suggested to an all-male board on a recent trip, if all the seats at the table are full, you just need to pull up an extra chair.

In the last year, I have encountered some extraordinary people, like yourselves, who are devoted to doing what they can to tackle the barriers women still face. I have also been fortunate enough to meet a number of women peacebuilders who have shared their stories and insights with me.

Last November, I also met the 2018 Nobel Prize Laureate, Dr Denis Mukwege at the PSVI International Film Festival in London. Dr Mukwege, a gynaecologist in the Democratic Republic of Congo, has treated hundreds of victims of rape and abuse. I was struck by what he said about the silence. He considers the silence to be an enemy of survivors of sexual violence and a crime in itself. The silence that prevents survivors, their families and communities from reporting these crimes and seeking justice and makes complicit those who deliberately enable such a situation. Here at the UN we can give survivors a voice, we can break down the stigma they face.

The positions that many of us in this room occupy gives us an enormous opportunity to support the work of these brave individuals. However, at the same time we cannot impose solutions. They must be home-grown. We must listen to those on the ground, whether it be women leaders breaking down barriers in the work place or survivors of sexual violence, and encourage support that is targeted at and appropriate for individual situations.

This is my first visit to CSW and my first opportunity to see the UN in action on these issues. It has made me even more determined to use my position to break down the silence around sexual violence and I will champion women's full and meaningful participation in peace processes, as part of my wider support for implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. I

will amplify and elevate the voices of women from those in business to those working tirelessly to bring peace to their communities.

I look forward to working with you over the coming months and years, especially as we look ahead to the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 next year. Thank you.

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## **News story: Exceptional work recognised by Commander JFC**

A selection of dedicated and hard-working members of Joint Forces Command (JFC) have been awarded Commander JFC Commendations in recognition of their outstanding work. Joint Forces Command prides itself on the quality of its staff, a mixture of service personnel, civil servants and contractors.

This week, Commander JFC, General Sir Chris Deverell, recognised the performances of the following individuals:

- Captain Charles Barrett
- W02 David Bone
- Lieutenant Commander Michael Bray
- W01 Mark Burton
- Lieutenant Jessie Casey
- Karen Clarke
- Stephen Dodd
- Christine Dowling
- Matthew Giddings
- Joanne Gregory
- Wing Commander Sophie Green
- W02 Steward Grigor-Ramsay
- Major Andrew Horsfall
- Peter Houghton
- Dave Howard
- Neil Jordison
- Lieutenant Thomas Longstaff
- Stephen Painter
- Donna Rogers
- Lieutenant Corporal Joshua Savage
- Commander Coralie Le Tourneau
- Paul Wileman

After presenting all the Commendation certificates, General Deverell praised the commitment from JFC's staff:

This is my final Commendations Ceremony as Commander JFC, and it

has been an absolute privilege to be able to award these commendations and recognise the contribution JFC staff make to UK Defence.

Commendations can be awarded in recognition of support to ongoing operations, engagement with communities, and acts of courage in the line of duty by an individual.

Wing Commander Sophie Green received an award for her work on delivering and producing the Defence Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Plan, which was launched at 10 Downing Street. Wing Commander Green shared:

It was an honour to lead a project so vital to so many people. It came as such a surprise to be nominated for a Commendation, it's great recognition for what was a fundamental project for the way we approach mental health within the Defence community.

David Howard, Permanent Joint Headquarters' (PJHQ) Policy Advisor Manager, has a career in Defence spanning over 40 years, and has demonstrated a continued commitment to delivering outstanding public service, through his support to military operations, working in Permanent Joint Headquarters since its establishment in 1996. After being presented with his commendation, David reflected on his Defence career.

To receive a Commendation is an unexpected honour, and it is humbling for my work in PJHQ to be recognised in this way. I have appreciated my time in Defence, and it has been an absolute privilege to work with so many dedicated people across so many different areas.

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## [News story: Inquiries Review](#)

Following publication on 12 February 2018 of the [Report and Recommendations into the Independent Review of Planning Appeal Inquiries](#), we have started looking into ways of implementing some of the recommendations, pending the Secretary of State's consideration of the full Report. We have therefore begun a trial of accelerating a small number of inquiry appeals as part of a pilot of holding inquiries much earlier than at present, and we are starting to work with those appellants and the local planning authorities involved with the appeals. This moves away from our "bespoke" process whereby we invite the parties to agree a programme, including an inquiry date.

Because this is a pilot, and is very much in its infancy, we can only conduct

a small number of cases in this way, and most will continue to follow our bespoke process. Also, it involves only inquiry appeals where we are satisfied at the outset that an inquiry is the most appropriate procedure. We will therefore be selecting candidate appeals from those received and will liaise with the parties. In the meantime, should prospective appellants wish to be involved, they are free to get in touch with us through our general enquiry line, but the final decision on which appeals to run within the pilot will be ours.

This is the first step in implementing a significant change in the way planning appeal inquiries are conducted and the process cannot be changed overnight, nor can we “bring forward” inquiries already arranged. We hope all parties will understand this and continue to work with us, whether or not “their” appeal is part of the pilot.

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## **Press release: Storm Gareth – Operation Stack activated on coast bound M20 between junctions 8 and 9 in Kent**

Drivers heading to the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel are being advised to plan ahead and leave extra time for their journeys as part of the coastbound M20 in Kent is being used to stack lorries due to Storm Gareth.

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## **Press release: Storm Gareth – Operation Stack activated on coast bound M20 between junctions 8 and 9 in Kent**

The high winds have led to severe restrictions in ferries arriving and leaving Dover, leading to hugely reduced capacity, with traffic queueing at the port. This has had a knock-on effect for Eurotunnel traffic.

As a result, Operation Stack has been activated between junctions 8 for Maidstone East and 9 for Ashford.

Operation Stack is where parts of the M20 are closed to queue lorries that are travelling towards the continent, to avoid causing gridlock across Kent's road network.

All Europe-bound freight traffic should head towards Dover on the M20 to join the queue at junction 8. Local and non-freight traffic must leave the M20 at junction 8.

It is expected that the M20/A20 and M2/A2 approaches will be busy for tourist, freight and local traffic. The diversions for non-freight traffic are:

- if you're heading to Eurotunnel, use the M20 and A20 and follow the hollow circle diversion symbol
- if you're heading to the Port of Dover, use the A2, M2, A2 towards Dover

Drivers are advised to:

- plan their journeys and allow extra time if required
- check travel conditions before setting out and, where it is safe to do so, during journeys
- make sure you have some supplies for your journey, such as food and water

For more details on Operation Stack and how it works, visit the Kent Police [advice page](#).

Highways England provides live traffic information via its website, local and national radio travel bulletins, electronic road signs and mobile apps. Local Twitter services are also available at [@HighwaysSEAST](#).

Drivers can also get travel advice from the following:

## **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.