

# Press release: Foreign Secretary announces appointment of UK Commonwealth Envoy

The Foreign Secretary has announced the appointment of Philip Parham CMG as the UK's Envoy to the Commonwealth.

Mr Parham, whose role begins on 18 June 2018, will lead the UK's effort to ensure delivery of the commitments made at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London in April 2018. His appointment at the start of the UK's period as Chair-in-Office underscores the UK's sustained commitment to a Commonwealth which is a powerful force for global good now and for the long term.

The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

Crucial commitments were made at the Commonwealth Summit in April, on the scourge of marine plastics, on trade, on cyber security, and on the vital matter of girls' education. The appointment of Philip Parham as Envoy shows the UK's dedication to ensuring these commitments are met.

I look forward to working with him as his team works with the member states and the Commonwealth Secretariat to deliver a fairer, more prosperous, more sustainable, and more secure Commonwealth.

## **Notes to Editors:**

- Philip Parham CMG returns to the FC0 after serving as British Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates since 2014. He has formerly served as British High Commissioner to Tanzania (2006-9), and as Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York (2009-13). The UK assumed the role of Chair-in-Office at Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), and will hold the position until the next CHOGM in Rwanda in 2020.

## **Further information**

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# [Press release: James Brokenshire publishes consultation on banning combustible cladding](#)

A consultation on banning the use of combustible materials on the external walls of high-rise residential buildings which are 18 metres or over has been published today (18 June 2018).

This was announced in Parliament by the Housing Secretary, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP.

The cladding believed to have been used on Grenfell Tower was unlawful under existing building regulations and should not have been used. The government wants to ensure that there is no doubt about which materials can be used on high-rise residential buildings.

This [consultation](#) is inviting views on our proposals to revise the building regulations to ban the use of combustible materials in the inner leaf, insulation and cladding that are used in external wall systems on these buildings.

Residents, industry and other interested parties will now be able to have their say on proposals affecting the safety of homes. The government is legally required to consult on substantive changes to the buildings regulations before any change in the law and this consultation will end on 14 August 2018.

The Secretary of State for Housing, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, said:

The Grenfell Tower fire was an appalling tragedy and we must do everything we can to ensure a disaster like this never happens again.

I have listened carefully to concerns and I intend to ban the use of combustible materials on the external walls of high-rise residential buildings, subject to consultation.

The cladding believed to have been used on Grenfell Tower was unlawful under existing building regulations. It should not have been used. But I believe that the changes on which we are consulting will offer even greater certainty to concerned residents and to the construction industry.

Following her comprehensive review of fire safety and building regulations, Dame Judith Hackitt recommended that a simpler but more robust approach to the construction and on-going management of high-rise residential buildings was needed.

The [government welcomed Dame Judith's report](#) and went even further than her recommendations, committing to:

- banning or restricting the use of desktop studies from being used to assess the fire performance of cladding systems, unless our [separate consultation](#) demonstrates that they can be safely used; the consultation has closed and we are reviewing responses
- change the law to achieve meaningful and lasting reform of the regulatory system, with strong sanctions for those who fail to comply
- invite views on how the government could implement major reform of the regulatory system in line with Dame Judith's review
- clarify building regulations fire safety guidance (Approved Document B)

See details of the [consultation](#).

The [Independent Expert Advisory Panel](#) has issued advice to building owners on how to ensure that their buildings comply with the existing building regulations. This advice still stands. The clearest ways of ensuring that an external wall system adequately resists external fire spread are either for all of the relevant elements of the wall to be in the top 2 European classes for fire performance (Class A1 or Class A2); or to use an external wall system which can be shown to have passed a large-scale test conducted to the BS8414 standard. In all instances, building owners are advised to seek professional advice by a competent and qualified person on what further steps to take with respect to their external wall system, based on the specific circumstances of their building including the external wall system design and condition, to satisfy themselves that their building is safe.

The government is consulting on proposals to ban combustible materials for residential buildings 18 metres or over, and whether only materials in those top 2 European classes for fire performance – reflective of the approach taken in Scotland – should be allowed over the entire external wall system – from the internal face of the wall through to its external face – with limited exemptions covering parts of the wall (such as paint) that do not present a significant contribution to the risk of fire spread.

There is a statutory requirement to consult under the Building Act 1984. This consultation complies with the duty on the Secretary of State to consult the Building Regulations Advisory Committee and other representative interests on proposed changes to the substantive requirements in the building regulations.

The deadline for consultation responses is 14 August 2018. Once closed, the department will consider all the comments received and provide a response as soon as possible.

In her [final report](#) Dame Judith Hackitt stated that using products which are non combustible or of limited combustibility is undoubtedly the lower risk option than undergoing a full system test.

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## **[News story: Motorcyclists encouraged to make their riding more enjoyable](#)**

The [DVSA enhanced rider scheme](#) is a voluntary scheme to help motorcyclists get more from their riding.

You're never too good, and the DVSA enhanced rider scheme lets you improve the skills that will help make your riding safer and more fun.

### **How the scheme works**

You book an appointment with an expert trainer. The trainers are passionate bikers who want to share their experience and advice to help you get more from your riding.

You'll get for a ride out with them for between 1 and 2 hours so they can see what you're good at and any areas you might be able to improve.

If you don't need any training, there's nothing more to do. You'll be sent a DVSA enhanced rider scheme certificate.

But if you do need some training, you'll work with your trainer on a personalised training plan. When you've done the training, you'll be sent a DVSA enhanced rider scheme certificate.

The cost of the scheme is set by individual trainers. Some local councils also offer a subsidy to help with the cost. Check with your trainer or local council.

### **Helping you through a lifetime of safe riding**

Mark Winn, DVSA Chief Driving Examiner, said:

DVSA's priority is to help you through a lifetime of safe riding.

You're never too experienced to learn more safety skills, and the DVSA enhanced rider scheme is all about helping make a ride out even more enjoyable.

While experience and riding regularly help, there's no substitute for the training, advice and tips you'll get from an expert

trainer.

## **Motorcyclists are among the most vulnerable road users**

In 2016, 319 motorcyclists died in incidents on Great Britain's roads, and 5,553 were seriously injured. Serious injuries include things like a broken neck or back, severe head injuries and internal injuries.

5,872 motorcyclists were killed or seriously injured in 2016

During the same time, 16,785 motorcycles were involved in all reported accidents.

Taking extra training can help reduce the risk of being involved in a collision, and make any ride out more enjoyable. The DVSA enhanced rider scheme includes modules on topics including:

- defensive riding and hazard awareness
- progress and use of speed
- effective braking techniques

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## **[News story: David Bunting appointed interim General Counsel and Solicitor](#)**

David, currently working in the Cross-Government Border Delivery Group, will take up the role from 1 July, becoming Director General of the Solicitor's Office and Legal Services Group and joining the department's Executive Committee, reporting to our Chief Executive Jon Thompson.

There will be an open recruitment process in the coming months to fill the role permanently.

David has more than 20 years' legal experience. He trained in the Inland Revenue and has worked extensively on tax matters, leading large HMRC legal teams dealing with tax policy and legislation in relation to UK business and environmental taxes including Corporation Tax, VAT, Customs and Excise duties, oil and gas taxation, Landfill Tax, Climate Change Levy and betting and gaming duties.

He has also led HMRC's litigation activity, overseeing about 10,000 cases at any one time involving billions in revenues. He was promoted into the Senior Civil Service in 2008 and in 2012 became a legal director at HMRC.

In 2017 David moved to the Border Delivery Group led by Karen Wheeler, a cross-UK government team focusing on the operational and practical impacts that EU exit may have on the UK's border.

He lives in Bristol and is married with two sons.

We will confirm any new arrangements in Border Delivery Group in due course.

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