

News story: Lord Duncan tours tourism, education, agriculture and whisky sectors on day of engagement

Lord Duncan said:

It has been a delight to visit so many engaging and positive locations. Across several sectors – tourism, education, agriculture and whisky – Scotland has a breadth of vibrant institutions and businesses like those I have visited today which the UK Government is determined to champion, as we leave the EU.

Lord Duncan was given a tour around Broughty Castle, by the Museum's Fine and Applied Art Section Leader, Anna Robinson, in Dundee who discussed the impact of the tourism economy on the castle and the benefits of [the regeneration of Dundee's waterfront with the new V&A and redevelopment of the surrounding area](#).

Going on to his alma mater, the University of St Andrews, Lord Duncan then discussed Tier 4 pilots with Professor and Senior Vice-Principal Lorna Milne. Tier 4 pilots are in their second year of running across 4 universities in England. However, a further 23 institutions have been selected to participate including the University of Glasgow and the University of Edinburgh. This extension highlights the UK Government's commitment to supporting UK universities in attracting international talent.

Acknowledging other institutions' interest in the scheme, Lord Duncan confirmed that he was working with the Home Office on possible extensions to other Scottish universities.

Heading to Allanhill Farm, owned and run by John Mitchell, Lord Duncan took the opportunity to tour the farm which now focusses on soft fruit and cereals, originally opening as a dairy farm. Their fruit is packed on location and marketed to major UK supermarket chains, enjoyed all over the UK. Planting their first crop of strawberries in 1995, Lord Duncan had the opportunity to see their extensive strawberry production.

The UK Government has pledged to continue to commit the same cash total in funds for farm support until the end of the parliament, expected in 2022.

Completing a full day of tours, Lord Duncan had the pleasure of visiting Lindores Abbey Distillery. Distilling has taken place on the site as early as 1494 but the old Abbey farm in its current form began filling casks in December 2017, a year which was record-breaking for Scotch whisky according to the Scotch Whisky Association.

The UK Government [recognises the Whisky industry's importance](#), as it is one

of the UK's most successful export products, exporting more than £4 billion to 180 countries across the world. It constitutes a fifth of all food and drink sold overseas from the UK.

Leaving the EU offers us an opportunity to forge new trading agreements and be a powerful force for free trade and the Whisky industry is a prime example of what the UK has to offer.

[News story: Home Office announces senior staffing changes](#)

The Second Permanent Secretary, Patsy Wilkinson, has decided to take on a national security role outside the department from next month. A process to appoint her successor will commence in due course.

It has also been announced that Charu Gorasia, currently interim Director General for Finance at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), has been appointed as the Home Office's new Director General for Capabilities and Resources. She will be replacing Fiona Spencer, who has filled the role in an interim basis since October 2017. Fiona will now return to her role as the Home Office's Chief Portfolio Officer.

Tyson Hepple has been appointed as interim Director General of Immigration Enforcement in place of Hugh Ind, who is moving to work at the Cabinet Office where he will take forward the Public Sector Apprenticeships Strategy. Tyson, currently the Director of Asylum and Protection in UK Visas and Immigration, will take up his Immigration Enforcement role in early June.

Permanent Secretary Sir Philip Rutnam said:

I'm delighted that Charu will be joining the team at the Home Office, bringing with her a wealth of experience from DWP, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and UK Trade & Investment, and I look forward to working with Tyson in his new role.

I also want to thank Patsy, Fiona and Hugh for their huge contribution to the Home Office in their senior roles and for their unswerving dedication to public service. I wish them every possible success going forward.

Speech: We support EU's trade negotiations as well as our own

I was intrigued to read in a number of papers on Tuesday, that the EU's new trade negotiations with Australia and New Zealand are apparently a set-back for the UK. Far from it, we welcomed them.

Australia and New Zealand are important trading partners for Britain, with trade worth £16 billion a year. It's no coincidence that 2 of the earliest announcements the new Department for International Trade made in 2016 were to establish new trade dialogues with both countries.

So trade discussions with both countries are already well underway; our trade dialogues with [Australia](#) and [New Zealand](#) met as recently as last month when UK officials traveled to Wellington and Canberra. It is correct to say that we cannot formally negotiate any future trade agreements until we have left the EU, but as we have agreed with the EU itself; we can begin formal negotiations once we leave next year.

Our trade dialogues will ensure they start from a strong position, having already laid the groundwork and built a shared understanding of each other's trade policy. They will also build on our historic links and mutual investment in each other's economies, worth £53 billion in 2016.

But while we have ambitious plans for our own trade with Australia and New Zealand, that doesn't mean we don't support the EU's ambitions.

In fact, I was at the EU trade ministers meeting in Brussels this week which agreed to start EU negotiations with both countries. I welcomed them, and the UK pledged to involve itself constructively in them, reigniting our unique bilateral relationships.

Just as the UK was one of the leading voices in the EU supporting new trade agreements with countries like Canada, so we remain the EU's biggest free trade advocate, before and after we leave.

Trade is not a zero-sum game. The EU securing new trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand is good news for the UK, as it increases the free flow of trade around the world, which supports consumers and businesses in all countries.

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom welcomed the EU negotiations "between likeminded partners" which "sends a strong signal at a time where many are taking the easy road of protectionism."

I completely agree. As International Trade Secretary Liam Fox, and I, have made clear on our meetings with governments around the world, and at the World Trade Organisation itself, the UK will lead the global call for free trade. That means us also working with like-minded partners including the EU, as well as Australia and New Zealand.

Both countries recognise the huge value that free trade brings to prosperity and growth. New Zealand is the only country to successfully conclude free trade agreements with China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. An impressive record, which is why we hired their top trade official, Crawford Falconer, as our own Chief Trade Negotiations Adviser.

I look forward to a day when the EU, UK, Australia and New Zealand all enjoy the benefits of open and free trade with one another.

As a member state, we support the EU commencing its negotiations. But just like in cricket, it isn't necessary to be the team that bats first.

[News story: Defence Secretary expands Army reserve numbers in Northern Ireland](#)

Updated: update

The stepped up commitment underlines the military's strong ties with Northern Ireland, which currently hosts around 2000 reserves and nearly 2000 regular personnel.

Mr Williamson made the announcement while visiting Northern Ireland based reservists from 152 (North Irish) Regiment, The Royal Logistic Corps and 2nd Battalion, the Royal Irish Regiment.

During the visit he also received an update on defence activities in Northern Ireland, including from 38 (Irish) Brigade, and met personnel helping keep the community safe by delivering niche explosive ordnance disposal and search support to the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

189 new reserve posts will be created, an increase of 9%, and will take overall Army reserve posts to 2100 by the end of the year.



Mr Williamson receives an update on defence activities in Northern Ireland from soldiers from 38 (Irish) Brigade.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Our reserves programme is immensely popular in Northern Ireland, with more than twice as many people from Northern Ireland volunteering compared to the national average.

So I'm delighted to increase the Army's reserve numbers in Northern Ireland, underlining the military's commitment to the entire United Kingdom.

All three services have a presence in Northern Ireland, with reserve recruitment proving to be particularly popular. More than twice as many people from Northern Ireland volunteer for the reserves compared to the national average. As well as the 1850 Army reservists, there are 110 Royal Navy and Royal Marine reserves and 130 Royal Auxiliary Air Force personnel. The popularity of the reserves programme in Northern Ireland is underlined by the fact that 502 Royal Auxiliary Air Force Squadron, which was only founded in 2012, has grown rapidly to a strength of 130.

Northern Ireland also hosts 75 cadet units, the majority of which are Army Cadets. Three schools have also recently gain approval for combined cadet forces under the Government's Cadet Expansion Programme. A report by Northampton University last year found that cadet units increase social mobility and help children from disadvantaged backgrounds reach their

potential. Cadet units in Northern Ireland have representation from children from across the community.

The Armed Forces Covenant is also being delivered across Northern Ireland and Mr Williamson received an update on the newly-formed Northern Ireland Veterans Support Office (NI VSO). The NI VSO acts on behalf of a group of service charities as a single point of contact to provide services for veterans who feel unable to access public bodies or service charities.

The MOD has also allocated £300,000 over five years to improve the capacity and capability of Local Authorities and other service providers in Northern Ireland to apply for Covenant Funding. £600,000 from the LIBOR Veterans Fund has also been allocated to the Somme Nursing Home in Belfast.

[News story: Cafcass new board members appointment](#)

The Secretary of State today (23 May 2018) announced the appointments of Sally Cheshire, Catherine Doran and Mandy Jones as the new board members of Cafcass.

Cafcass was created under the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000. The body safeguards and promotes the welfare of children involved in family court proceedings

The appointments are for a period of 3 years from 14 May 2018 to 13 May 2021.

Sally Cheshire CBE is Chair of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, the UK's regulator of the fertility sector and embryo research, and Chair of the North region for Health Education England. She is a Board member for Adoption Counts, one of the first regional adoption agencies in England and she is also an independent member of adoption panels in the North West.

Catherine Doran is a Non-Executive Director of the Disclosure and Barring Service, she also a Trustee and Board Member of the Over The Wall Charity which provides camps for children and young people who have life threatening illnesses.

Mandy Jones has in excess of 25 years experience working in the Civil Service in a number of high profile senior roles. She led a number of major organisational change programmes working nationally and internationally within the Home Office, Ministry of Justice and for the Cabinet Office.

These appointments have been conducted in accordance with the Cabinet Office Governance Code on Public Appointments.

They have declared no political activity