

News story: Appointment of Edward Timpson CBE as new CAFCASS Chair

Edward Timpson CBE has been appointed as the Chair of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) from 9 April 2018 to 8 April 2021

Edward was MP for Crewe and Nantwich between 2008 and 2017. Before entering Parliament Edward spent 10 years working as a Family Law Barrister specialising in children's cases. Growing up, his family fostered 90 children over 30 years and he has 2 adopted brothers.

He was Minister of State for Children and Families from May 2015 to July 2016 and Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families at the Department for Education from July 2016 to June 2017.

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

This appointment has been conducted in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Speech: "We cannot ignore what has happened in Salisbury."

Thank you very much Mr President.

We didn't seek this meeting but we take requests from the Council to meet very seriously and I am pleased to be able to update the Council on some developments, but I am also pleased to be able to provide the intellectual clarity our Russian colleague has called for and I will stick in my statement to the facts.

Following the poisoning on 4 March in Salisbury of Sergei and Yulia Skripal, the UK has launched one of the most comprehensive and complex investigations into the use of a chemical weapon ever, it involves more than 250 police detectives. They are supported by a range of specialist experts and partners. They are trawling through more than 5000 hours of CCTV. They are examining more than 1350 seized exhibits. And they are interviewing more than 500 witnesses.

Mr President, in the UK the police are independent of government but if there

are more details we can share with the Council as the investigation proceeds, we would be very happy to do so.

We all know what that investigation is under ways, it's because a military grade nerve agent was used in an attempt to kill civilians on British soil. It was carried out recklessly, and it was carried out without regard for public safety. It was a weapon of mass destruction. A British Police Officer was in a critical condition alongside the Skripals. And ordinary members of the public going about their daily business were put at risk.

Mr President, I am glad not only to be able to inform the Council that Yulia Skripal is able to communicate and is getting better, I can also clarify what the Russian Ambassador said about consular access. We have received a request from the Russian consulate. We have conveyed it to Yulia Skripal. And we await her response. This is an obligation under international law that the British Government takes very seriously but there is also the question of Ms Skripal's own wishes which need to be taken into account.

Mr President, the Russian Ambassador had several points to make about the UK demands of Russia. As he outlined, on 12 March we asked the Russian Government a clear question. Russia refused to respond and said it considered the request 'null and void'. It was indeed true, Mr President, that we asked for a response within 24 hours for an answer to the question how did a Russian developed military grade nerve agent come to be on the streets of Salisbury? And did that mean that Russia had lost control of its CW stocks? We said that Russia should declare its Novichok programme to the OPCW. We gave 24 hours Mr President because this is a weapon of mass destruction. It is no ordinary poisoning and no ordinary attack and in our view the circumstances justified that tight deadline. But, notwithstanding that, the Russians said to us the request was 'null and void'. They did not say 'please give us more time', they did not come to us and say 'we would like to look into this with you'. They rejected the very premise of the request.

We have said, as the Russian Ambassador quoted, that it is highly likely Russia carried out this assassination. The British Government came to that conclusion because the positive identification by experts at Porton Down of the specific chemical used is a type of Novichok nerve agent. Porton Down, Mr President, is an accredited laboratory under, and it conforms to, the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is allowed to conduct protective research. The second reason that helped us come to our conclusion was the knowledge that Russia has produced this nerve agent within the last 10 years and remains capable of doing so and as the Prime Minister made clear within the British Parliament we know that the Russian state has investigated ways of assassination through the use of nerve agent. The third reason is Russia's record of conducting state-sponsored assassinations and I don't want to detain the Council Mr President by going through a long list but I can provide examples if anyone would like to hear them. And we also made our own assessment that Russia views defectors as suitable targets for assassination and indeed there are public statements from Russian leaders to that effect.

I'd like if I may, Mr President, just to say something about the use of the phrase 'highly likely'. We use this phrase because under the British system

only a court can finally determine culpability so the use of the phrase 'highly likely' is a reflection on the judicial process and should not be construed as casting doubt whatsoever on the likelihood of Russia being responsible. I would also like to take this opportunity to address the Russian Ambassador's comment about Porton Down contradicting the Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson. There was no contradiction. The Foreign Secretary was making clear that Porton Down were sure the nerve agent was a Novichok – a point they have subsequently reinforced. He goes on in the same interview to make clear why based on that information, additional intelligence and, as I said, the lack of alternative explanation from the Russians, we have reached the conclusion we have. What the Foreign Secretary said then, and what Porton Down have said recently, is fully consistent with what we have said throughout. In contrast Mr President we have had innumerable theories from the Russians, I think we have counted some 24 in all. On 21 March for example the Russian Foreign Ministry said they believed terrorists did it. On the 14 March, Mr Lavrov said the British response was aimed at distracting from Brexit. Mr President, the use of chemical weapons on any country's territory is far too serious for these theories to hold water.

The Chemical Weapons Convention, which came into force 21 years ago, is clear in its Article VII that states must adopt legislation criminalising activity prohibited under the convention. That's why the UK is conducting a full investigation of the incident, including under our own Chemical Weapons Act. Because of this, in addition to the UK criminal investigation, we invited the OPCW, the relevant international body, to assist in verifying our analysis and this is on the basis of Article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This mandates the Technical Secretariat to provide technical assistance and technical evaluation to States Parties.

Everything we have done, Mr President, has been consistent with the Convention on Chemical Weapons. And if I may say so, Mr President, I won't take any lectures on morality or our responsibilities under Conventions from a country, which as this Council debated yesterday, has done so much to block the proper investigation of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The UK's track record on that, Mr President, speaks for itself.

On 21 March, OPCW deployed a team to the UK to visit the locations where the victims were exposed to a toxic chemical. The DG briefed the OPCW Executive Committee yesterday on their actions. OPCW expert staff collected environmental samples from the scene and biomedical samples from the victims. OPCW has verified the chain of custody. These samples have been sent to several designated laboratories for testing. Analysis from the laboratories will now be returned to the OPCW, who will produce a report. Contrary to the Russian claims, Mr President, the United Kingdom looks forward to sharing its findings once we have received that report.

Yesterday, Russia tabled a resolution at the OPCW Executive Committee proposing a joint investigation. Mr President, there are several ways to view this joint investigation. I think the metaphor that I find most apt is that of an arsonist turned firefighter, but in this particular instance, the arsonist wishes to investigate his own fire.

Having failed to get a joint investigation, the resolution only received 6

out of 41 votes in favour. And without waiting for the outcome of OPCW testing, Russia has reverted to a familiar path of undermining the international institution involved. There is no other construction we can place for Mr Lavrov's remarks today that Russia "will accept results of the OPCW Salisbury poisoning investigation only if Russian experts participate in it." I am sorry Mr President, but that does not make it an independent investigation.

If Russia insists on having its own experts, it seeks to move away from the Chemical Weapons Convention's stipulation and it is setting a test that no independent investigation could credibly tolerate.

This is part of a wider pattern of irresponsible Russian behaviour. Russia discredited the Joint Investigative Mechanism into use of chemical weapons in Syria. Members of the Council will be familiar with the pattern of aggression over the years in Georgia and Crimea. There has been the shooting down of MH17, and there has been a bungled attempt at a coup in Montenegro. And each time, Mr President, these acts are accompanied by distortion and disinformation. The same sort of distortion and disinformation we saw yesterday in the Hague, in the Russian press conferences, and in the Security Council today.

Mr President, whilst we ourselves would not have called this meeting today, we hope to be able to brief the Council further once we receive the report from OPCW. We do believe that it is right that the Security Council remains seized of this flagrant use of chemical weapons, and it is that use which threatens international peace and security. The threats to the chemical weapons convention from attacks in Syria, in Malaysia, and now the United Kingdom pose a serious challenge to the non-proliferation regime that this Council and others have carefully constructed in response to the terrible events of the past. There is one country among us Mr President, Russia, which is playing fast and loose with our collective security and the international institutions that protect us.

It is that reason, Mr President, that leads people to accuse Russia and to take steps against her. It is not out of lack of friendship with the Russian people or lack of respect from Russia as a country. My own Foreign Secretary visited in the hope of establishing a more productive relationship with Foreign Minister Lavrov. But we cannot ignore what has happened in Salisbury. We cannot ignore Russia turning a blind eye to the use of chemical weapons in Syria and in Salisbury. And we cannot ignore the way that Russia seeks to undermine the international institutions, which have kept us safe since the end of the Second World War.

Mr President, we believe that the UK's actions stand up to any scrutiny. We have acted in accordance with the CWC throughout, and through the body charged for these purposes, the OPCW, we are happy to come to Council at any time. We would be very willing to hold an open briefing at our Mission here in New York if there are Members of the UN that still have questions. We have nothing to hide, Mr President, but I do fear that Russia might have something to fear.

Thank you very much.

Rebuttal by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council meeting on Salisbury

Thank you very much Mr President, I won't detain colleagues for very long. There is another very good quote from Alice in Wonderland which is: "sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast" so I think that's the quote the suits my Russian colleague best. I just wanted to say that I am committed to keeping the Council updated. We will share with the Council at the Council's request as much information as we can, as and when we have it and in accordance with developments.

[News story: Scottish quarterly GDP figures show continued growth](#)

Commenting on the Scottish GDP figures published Wednesday 4 April 2018, Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

It is good news that today's GDP figures show that Scotland's economy continues to grow. I note a modest improvement in Scotland's important services sector, and encouraging growth in production industries.

However, it is increasingly concerning that a significant gap persists between Scotland's economy and the rest of the UK. The Scottish Government has the powers to boost productivity and strengthen the economy, and must use them to close this gap. By making Scotland the highest taxed part of the UK, the Scottish Government risks damaging, rather than growing, our economy.

Scotland's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 0.3% in real terms during the fourth quarter of 2017, following growth of 0.2% in the third quarter of 2017. The equivalent growth rate for the UK as whole during the third quarter was 0.4%.

In the latest quarter, output in the Scottish Services sector grew by 0.5%, output in the Production sector grew by 0.9%, and output in the Construction sector fell by 2.6%.

Compared to the same quarter last year, Scottish GDP has grown by 1.1%. Equivalent UK growth over the year was 1.4%.

In 2017, annual GDP increased by 0.8% compared to 2016, following growth of 0.2% between 2015 and 2016. The equivalent UK growth rate for 2017 was 1.8%.

The full Scottish Government [statistical bulletin](#) is available for download.

[Press release: New building performance standards to save MOD up to 20%](#)

Infrastructure is a vital defence capability delivering accommodation, training facilities and critical assets such as runways and workshops to enable our armed forces to live, work, train and deploy. Recent DIO projects include building a jetty at Portsmouth Naval Base so the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth can dock, and resurfacing runways at RAF Akrotiri, RAF Gibraltar, and RAF Valley.

The defence estate is large, diverse and widely dispersed across the UK and overseas. In the UK, it covers around 230,000 hectares comprising military training areas, naval bases, barracks, airfields, supply depots, and offices. Construction on these sites is sometimes subject to specific defence requirements but the majority is similar to other sectors, so the new standards have been developed in accordance with comparators from industry and other government departments. They are designed to be used by MOD staff and industry partners responsible for the planning, costing and delivery of the infrastructure assets and projects funded by MOD.

The new standards, Joint Services Publication (JSP) 315, are expected to save up to 20% on construction costs by creating efficient standards, enabling faster and more cost-effective project development and delivery. They also recognise the success and cost savings DIO has achieved in recent years from increasing the use of modular construction and standardisation of designs, as well as utilising 3D digital and interactive technology.

Graham Dalton, DIO's Chief Executive, said:

The new standards mark a step forward in how DIO enables our military to provide the most effective and efficient solutions and how we work better with the construction industry. The revised standards make it absolutely clear what our requirements are and will contribute to a significant cost and time saving on our infrastructure projects.

The new standards and supporting guidance set a series of reference designs for specific defence infrastructure requirements and benchmark capital and operational costs for the planning and delivery of MOD infrastructure.

The revised JSP 315 can be found [here](#)

[Press release: Images offer glimpse of A45 Chowns Mill upgrade](#)

As part of the government's £15.2bn road investment strategy, Highways England is developing a scheme to improve the A45/A6 Chowns Mill junction, leading to more reliable and safer journeys for people and businesses by reducing congestion and increasing capacity on the road.



Work will include widening the A45 and A6 approaches to provide additional traffic lanes, creating an additional roundabout section on the south side of the existing roundabout and introducing traffic signals to manage traffic safely and effectively.

The work will:

- improve journey times by providing additional lanes
- improve safety by changing the junction layout and introducing traffic signals – managing the flow of traffic through the junction more effectively and reducing the chance of collisions

- support economic growth by encouraging continued investment in the regional economy and support new business and residential opportunities
- improve access for cyclists and pedestrians thanks to new signalled crossings which will make it safer to cross the junction – all crossing points will be designed for users with disabilities

The A45 is a key link between the A14 and M1, serving the growing Northampton, Wellingborough and Rushden areas.

As part of the scheme the junction will be redesigned as a half hamburger layout with a new link road connecting the A6 North and A5028 with the existing roundabout. This will improve the existing junction to allow better flow of traffic reducing congestion through the junction. All approaches will be widened to provide extra lanes and increase capacity.

Highways England project manager, Rachael Langfield, said:

Chowns Mill roundabout currently suffers from severe congestion at peak travel times, leading to long queues on all approaches. This congestion will increase as traffic levels grow.

The scheme we have developed will improve journey times and safety along the A45 and A6 corridors as well as boost capacity to support planned growth in the local area, which is great news for the local and regional economy.

There will be no need to purchase any additional land with improvements to the junction carried out within the existing roundabout boundary.

Construction is due to begin in late 2019 and is expected to be completed within two years.

Public information exhibitions take place tomorrow and Saturday where people can find out more.

The exhibition times and locations are as follows:

- Friday 6 April 2018 – 2pm to 8pm Park Road Baptist Church, Park Road, Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 0RG
- Saturday 7 April 2018 – 10am to 4pm Park Road Baptist Church, Park Road, Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 0RG

People can also ask questions about the scheme by:

- emailing info@a45chownsmill.com
- [visit the Highways England website where you can also sign up for email alerts:](#)
- write to: A45 Chowns Mill improvement team , Highways England, Stirling House, Lakeside Court, Osier Drive, Sherwood Business Park, Nottingham NG15 0DS.
- call the Highways England Customer Contact Centre on 0300 123 5000.

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.