

Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Estonia

Press release

Mr Ross Allen has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Estonia in succession to Mrs Theresa Bubbear.



Mr Ross Allen has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Estonia in succession to Mrs Theresa Bubbear who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Allen will take up his appointment during May 2021.

Full name: Ross Allen

Married to: Suzanna Harrison

Children: Three

2015 to Present	New York, Deputy Consul General and Deputy Trade Commissioner, USA
2014 to 2015	FCO, Head, Consular Assistance Department
2013 to 2014	Secondment to Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking
2010 to 2013	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Private Secretary to Deputy Prime Minister
2008 to 2010	Washington DC, First Secretary (Middle East)
2007 to 2008	FCO, Press Officer to Minister for Europe
2004 to 2007	Jerusalem, HM Consul, Political
2003 to 2004	Full-time Language training (Arabic)
2001 to 2002	FCO, Desk Officer, Non-Proliferation Department

Published 5 November 2020

Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Luxembourg: Fleur Thomas

Press release

Ms Fleur Thomas has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in succession to Mr John Marshall.



Ms Fleur Thomas has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in succession to Mr John Marshall. Ms Thomas will take up her appointment during April 2021.

Full name: Fleur Louise Thomas

Married to: Single

Children: One son

2018 to present	Ministry of Defence, Head of Exports, Security, Policy and Operations
2016 to 2018	Department for International Trade, Regional Director – Europe, Africa, Middle East, Central & South Asia, Defence and Security Organisation
2014 to 2016	Council for Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations, Director Engagement
2002 to 2015	Roles including South East Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association (SERFCA), Regional Director – SaBRE Campaign; Employer Support Executive, Managing Director, Forward Learning Technologies Ltd; and Associate Lecturer and Consultant, Open University
1995 to 2002	British Airways, Cabin Crew

Published 5 November 2020

Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry to hold public sessions to probe human impact and the institutional settings

- The Inquiry will hold open sessions to hear from those in the most senior positions in the Post Office Limited, Fujitsu and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to understand what went wrong in relation to Horizon
- public sessions will also be held to understand the human cost to those impacted by the longstanding Horizon dispute

Senior members of the Post Office Limited, Fujitsu and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will be invited to give evidence in formal open sessions as part of the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, its Chair Sir Wyn Williams has announced today.

The non-statutory inquiry is committed to understanding and acknowledging what went wrong in relation to Horizon and to ensuring that there is a public summary of the failings that occurred at Post Office Ltd so that they should never be repeated.

The Inquiry follows the conclusion and a settlement of £57.75 million in December 2019 at the end of a long-running civil court case brought against Post Office Limited by a group of postmasters regarding issues related to the Horizon IT system.

Sir Wyn Williams, who was appointed Chair of the inquiry in September, has today published a [Statement of Approach](#), setting out how the Inquiry will engage with relevant parties. Further details will be published at the end of November.

Evidence gathering will occur in a number of different forms and in a manner which is designed to maximise the receipt of information. There will be:

1. Public sessions: focus groups sessions will be held in winter 2020 to 2021 so that persons affected by the failings in the Horizon system can share their accounts of the human cost and impact. Sir Wyn hopes to hear from current and former postmasters, employees of the Post Office Limited, relevant third parties (including but not limited to contractors and/or those who have represented postmasters interests, or who have been involved in mediation and/or dispute resolution processes with the Post Office Limited) and the family of friends of these groups.

In May 2021 Sir Wyn will invite the senior members of the Post Office Limited, Fujitsu and BEIS to provide evidence in a public and open setting.

2. A call for evidence and a people survey: formal invitations will be extended to collect written evidence via a call for evidence being launched

at the close of November 2020, and a people survey conducted in early 2021. These will support the Inquiry's understanding of the institutional setting and the experience of postmasters and employees/contractors at the Post Office Limited both historically and as the company seeks to respond to the findings in the Horizon judgments and implement the measures set out in the Settlement Agreement.

3. Private hearings: Sir Wyn will also welcome personal accounts and/or sensitive evidence in select private hearings throughout winter 2020 to 2021.

Sir Wyn Williams, Chair of the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, said:

My approach to evidence gathering is intended to build on the findings in the Horizon judgments (No 3 and No 6) and analysis which will be undertaken by the Inquiry Secretariat of written material which will be provided to the Inquiry by Post Office Limited, Fujitsu and BEIS. I fully understand that many participants have an expressed view that their experiences have not been properly acknowledged and that there has been a failure to hold anyone to account for what occurred over very many years.

The process of obtaining evidence will be robust and transparent wherever possible although there may be instances in which the need to respect privacy and the need for sensitivity means that private hearings will have to be accommodated.

Sir Wyn's [Statement of Approach](#) includes an Expression of Interest form for participants to register their interest in the sessions described here.

Post Office Ltd, Fujitsu, which supplied the Horizon system, and BEIS have committed to fully cooperating with the Inquiry.

[36th Universal Periodic Review: UK statement on Andorra](#)

World news story

The UK delivers statement on Andorra at the 36th Session of Universal Periodic Review (UPR), sharing recommendations to improve their human rights record.



The Universal Periodic Review takes place in Geneva.

Thank you,

The United Kingdom recognises Andorra's progress since its 2015 review and its commitment to upholding human rights. We welcome the adoption in 2017 of the Law on action against trafficking in human beings and for the protection of victims, and the introduction of legal provisions on a recovery and reflection period and a renewable residence permit for victims of trafficking. We do, however, remain concerned about the limitations which remain on women's sexual and reproductive rights, specifically the criminalisation of abortion, and encourage the Andorran government to urgently revise this.

We recommend that Andorra:

1. Develop a multi-disciplinary framework for the proactive identification of victims of trafficking for referral to assistance and support, involving law enforcement agencies, labour inspections, health-care staff, social workers and child protection authorities, with particular attention to at-risk sectors.
2. Adopt an open, merit-based process when selecting national candidates for UN Treaty Body elections;
3. Amend domestic legislation to protect women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Thank you, Madam President.

Published 5 November 2020

Joint statement on UK – GCC Joint Trade and Investment Review

Secretary General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, H.E. Dr Nayef Falah M. Al-Hajraf, and Minister for International Trade of the United Kingdom, Ranil Jayawardena, M.P., have formally agreed to undertake a Joint Trade and Investment Review (JTIR) between the United Kingdom and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and on 4th November met virtually to formally approve the Terms of Reference and timeline for this project, as well as its structure and expected results and discuss progress to date.

Dr Abdel Aziz Hamad Aluwaisheg, the GCC Assistant Secretary General for Political and Negotiation Affairs, and Simon Penney, Her Majesty's Trade Commissioner for the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan, took part in the meeting.

This meeting builds on successful engagement over recent months. The GCC Secretary General and the Minister for International Trade discussed the principles of a United Kingdom-GCC Joint Trade and Investment Review when they met on 15th June 2020, with the first United Kingdom-GCC JTIR working group taking place on 24th June between senior officials from the GCC Secretariat and the Department for International Trade of the United Kingdom. Economic and analytical experts met on 8th September, where both sides discussed how to identify priority trade and investment sectors for consideration during the review.

This collaboration marks a further strengthening of the trade and investment relationship between the GCC and the United Kingdom. The GCC is already one of the United Kingdom's largest trading partners, with bilateral trade amounting to almost £45 billion in 2019. With the United Kingdom embarking on its new independent trade policy outside of the European Union, and with GCC Member States delivering their economic diversification and vision plans, now is the moment for the United Kingdom and the GCC to build on their historic and deep friendship to develop even closer economic ties, boosting our trade and investment further still. We celebrate the strength of the bilateral relationship, nowhere more apparent than through our continued collaboration on the Covid-19 pandemic, and share an ambition of boosting our businesses, delivering new investment, creating new jobs and ensuring prosperity in the years to come.

The Joint Trade and Investment Review is a collaboration between the United Kingdom and the GCC to assess the current state of our trade and investment relationship, as well as identify opportunities to enhance cooperation for the future. The Review will be based on empirical analysis and engagement with businesses operating in both markets. Rapid work will now be undertaken, resulting in a joint report that will include recommendations for the United Kingdom and the GCC, and will complement the ongoing bilateral engagement with individual GCC Member States.

Both parties agreed to meet again in the near future as we jointly drive forward this work on the road to an even closer trade and investment relationship.