

Dstl scientists and military advisers receive New Year's Honours

Dr Phillippa Spencer has been awarded the Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE), in recognition of her support to the UK's decision makers by her application of maths to deliver consistent, assured data to prevent the loss of life through exposure to COVID-19, Novichok and Ebola.

Philippa said:

I am genuinely overwhelmed by the honour. The award recognises not only me, but an incredible team of people who provide vital support to so many collective efforts. I am beyond happy to have been nominated.

Dr Joanne Thwaite has been awarded the Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE), which recognises her service to the NHS during COVID-19, in particular her selfless dedication carrying out repeated and sustained deployments to Hospital laboratories where she supported NHS staff dealing with an unprecedented increase of workload. Using her scientific skillset Joanne worked within diagnostic laboratories, from the very onset of the pandemic.

Joanne said:

I am humbled and excited to be nominated for this honour which also represents the dedication and professionalism of a team of other Dstl specialist microbiologists. I am proud to be a part of that team and that I could help NHS colleagues deliver life-saving care at this time of acute national health response

Dstl Military Adviser Lt Col Gareth Walker Royal Engineers (RE) also receives an OBE in recognition of his performance in command of 66 Works Group with responsibility for Defence's specialist water, fuel and materials infrastructure capabilities. During a two and a half year period he led vital military support to natural disasters in the British Caribbean and extreme flooding events in the UK, as well as myriad operations and tasks worldwide.

I am absolutely delighted to be receiving this most prestigious award, and am incredibly grateful to those that nominated me. It is a privilege and honour to work in this amazing organisation that is home to some of the most talented people I have worked with. Dstl engineers, scientists and analysts are dedicated to developing and improving capabilities that are vital to the UK's defence and

security, and it is exciting to be part of a team that is redoubling its efforts to meet the future challenges and threats that we face.

We also congratulate Warrant Officer 1st Class (W01) Ian Conolly, who has been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) in the Queen's New Year's Honours list. Ian works as the Senior Acoustic Analyst within the Underwater Group at Dstl Portsmouth West. The MSM is a very old medal, first established in the 1840s; there is a strict limit on the number of annual awards and it is now only awarded to non-commissioned officers who have provided unbroken "good, faithful and meritorious service." The Royal Navy may recommend its award to no more than 49 recipients annually.

Dstl's Chief Executive Gary Aitkenhead, said:

I offer my sincere congratulations to all those awarded. It gives me great pride to see our people recognised in this prestigious way. The awards are deserved recognition of dedication, professionalism and technical excellence.

British exporters recognised in New Year's Honours List 2021

Today, International Trade Secretary Liz Truss MP is congratulating UK exporters, business leaders and DIT staff who have been recognised with Honours for their exceptional and outstanding service to international trade, investment, and exporting.

Those honoured this time around represent a diverse range of businesses, from sourcing PPE for the pandemic, green energy, trade policy negotiations and to services exports in the creative industry such as cross-cultural theatre productions.

The New Year's Honours List also recognises the work and dedication undertaken by those who worked during the pandemic to keep the country safe.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

All those being honoured have made a terrific contribution to the UK over the past year, whether it be leading the fight against coronavirus or helping champion free and fair trade across the world. We owe them a debt of gratitude for their hard work.

More trade and investment is vital to delivering the jobs and economic growth we need to recover from the pandemic and build back better. Our innovative and go-getting exporters are critical to that, and we will continue to support them as they look to sell more of their wares overseas this coming year and beyond.

Antonia Romeo, Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Trade, said:

I am extremely proud of DIT colleagues recognised for their hard work for the Department on international trade issues.

It is also excellent to see so many British exporters and business leaders recognised in the 2021 New Year Honours List, showcasing the success of British exports abroad.

Many congratulations to them, and to all recipients.

Exporters and business leaders in the New Year's Honours List 2021 include:

- Kirsty Hamilton; Associate Fellow, Chatham House (OBE)
- Stuart Paul Gibbons; Managing Director, Le Mark Group (OBE)
- Sharon Pursey; Co-Founder, SafeToNet (OBE)
- Steve Crane; Chief Executive Officer, business Link Japan and Executive Director of Export to Japan (OBE)
- Matthew Hurn; Chief Financial Officer, Mubadala Investment Company, Chairman, Association of Corporate Treasurers, Middle East (OBE)
- Ella Spira, Co-founder, Sisters Grimm (MBE)
- Piertra Mello-Pittman, Co-Founder, Sisters Grimm (MBE)
- Laura Bounds, Managing Director, Kent Crisps (MBE)
- Manoj Varsani, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Hammock (MBE)
- Paul Jonathan Morris, Founder and Chief Executive Addmaster UK Limited (MBE)
- Zoe Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, Sparkol (MBE)
- Daniel Leigh Brooks, Chief Executive Officer, Virtual Human Resources (MBE)

Staff from the Department for International Trade (DIT) have also been recognised in the 2021 New Year Honours list, including:

- Matthew Davies; Deputy Director, Trade Agreements Continuity Programme (OBE)
- Deborah Clarke; Country Director, Department for International Trade Malaysia (OBE)

- Ruchi Nanda – Lately Account Manager, Trade, Investment and Business Support (MBE)
- Jasmine Baker – Head of Insurance and Asset Management British Embassy Beijing (MBE)
- Chris Dunn – Head of Infrastructure and Environment (China), Energy, Infrastructure, Creative and Sports Directorate (MBE)

Exporters recognised in this list include Laura Claire Bounds, who manages three businesses: Kent Crisps, Kentish Oils and Kentish Condiments. Her businesses already export to twelve countries around the world, including in the Middle East. Laura started exporting in 2015 and has worked tirelessly with DIT in getting the brand into overseas markets, particularly in Asia.

Laura Claire Bounds, Managing Director, Kent Crisps, said:

To have been awarded an MBE is an absolute privilege, especially when it relates to the work done for a county that I am so proud to be a part of.

Kent Crisps is made up of a small but extremely passionate team, without whom I would not have had this opportunity. I hope that this proves to others that we all can make a difference, and that with hard work & determination, anything is possible.

Pietra Marie De Mello-Pittman and Ella Louvaine Spira are other impressive UK exporters listed in the New Year Honours List 2021. They are the co-founders of Sisters Grimm, a productions company which creates cross-cultural collaborations in art, music and dance. The business is a creative partnership of former Royal Ballet ballerina Pietra Mello-Pittman and Grammy-nominated composer Ella Spira.

Pietra and Ella have worked with DIT to expand Sisters Grimm into new worldwide marketplaces such as Voices of the Amazon, working with Brazilian partners and Sakura in Japan. Their productions have been presented on the biggest stages across the globe.

Pietra Marie De Mello-Pittman and Ella Louvaine Spira, Co-founders of Sisters Grimm, said:

Being honoured with an MBE is a wonderful recognition of the role we play bringing talent together internationally. We feel such a passion and a drive for representing other cultures, and seeing our shows reach audiences all over the world.

It is an honour to be recognised not only in contributing to the creative industry but also for services to international trade. As female founders from mixed heritage backgrounds, we have had to

overcome challenges to not only create a business model around the arts, but to be recognised as internationalists.

The impact that the arts can have on society should never be undervalued – they allow people to make sense of their emotions in a space they often don't give themselves. In these dark and difficult times for live entertainment we mustn't lose sight of how the arts have the ability to join people together.

[Letter from Michelle Donelan to higher education providers](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]A letter from Michelle Donelan MP, Minister of State for Universities, to higher education providers about students' return in Spring 2021.

[Statement on attacks in Aden, Yemen](#)

News story

James Cleverly, Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, has issued the below statement condemning the attacks in Aden today.



James Cleverly, Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, said:

“I am appalled by today's attacks in Aden following the arrival of the new Yemeni Government. This government leads a country facing horrendous humanitarian crisis, economic turmoil and ongoing conflict alongside the

coronavirus pandemic.

"It has the UK's full support and I strongly condemn today's heinous acts, which have left innocent people dead and many more injured. My thoughts and sincere condolences are with all those affected."

Published 30 December 2020

Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 30 December 2020

Today I want to begin with the good news: the approval of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine which is a fantastic achievement for British science

And which will allow us to vaccinate more people, and also vaccinate them more quickly.

And there is one important development that's helping us to accelerate our vaccination programme across the whole of the UK:

We've had new advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation that the first dose can protect people against the worst effects of this virus

because the benefits kick in after two or three weeks.

And so from now on we will give a first dose to as many vulnerable people as possible,

with the second dose to follow twelve weeks later.

And what that means is we can vaccinate and protect many more people in the coming weeks.

I know everyone watching this will want to know when you can get your vaccine and all I want to say is we are working as hard and as fast as we can to get the supplies to you, and as soon as we have the supplies we will be getting them into people's arms

To summarise where we are

We have to face the fact we've got two big things happening at once in our fight against Covid –

One is working for us; and one working against us.

On the plus side we have two valid vaccines and we are racing, as I say, to get them out.

On the downside, there is a new strain of the virus which is spreading much faster and surging across the country.

And we have seen a 40 per cent increase in cases in England in the last week alone,

almost 15 per cent more patients in hospital – more than at the peak of the first wave.

And yesterday sadly we recorded almost a thousand deaths across the UK, for the first time since April.

So at this critical moment with the prospect of freedom within reach

We've got to redouble our efforts to contain the virus.

That's why the Health Secretary has announced that more areas of England will be moving into Tier 4 from tomorrow

And as I say again, no-one regrets these measures more bitterly than I do.

But we must take firm action now

and that's why we have to think very hard about schools.

Because today of course it remains the case that keeping children in education is a national priority

it remains the case that schools are safe.

But we must face the reality that the sheer pace of the spread of this new variant

requires us now to take even tougher action in some areas and that does affect schools

Let me set out for you what this means.

In most of England, primary schools will still reassemble next week, as planned for the new term.

But, in the areas we have just published today on gov.uk,

I am afraid the start of the new term will be delayed until at least January 18,

when the latest data on those infection rates will be reviewed.

That is because the rate of transmission in these areas is so high, and there's just such pressure on the local NHS, that extra action is required to control the spread of the virus.

The children of key workers, or those who are considered to be vulnerable, will still go back to primary schools from next week – wherever they live in England.

They are not affected by today's announcement.

In secondary schools, all vulnerable children and the children of critical workers will go back next week across England, as originally planned.

But we will ask exam year pupils in secondary schools to learn remotely during the first week of term

and return to the classroom from 11 January.

The remaining secondary school pupils, i.e. non exam groups will go back a week later, that is from 18 January – but I want to stress that depending on the spread of the disease it may be necessary to take further action in their cases as well, in as I say the worst affected areas.

To minimise disruption in schools and to fight the disease we are massively expanding our testing operation

ensuring that every secondary school pupil is tested as they return, and regularly thereafter.

Again I want to thank the teachers, pupils and parents who have worked so hard to keep schools safe and keep them open.

We are also asking universities to reduce the number of students who return to campus in January, prioritising medical courses and others requiring face to face teaching.

And in all cases, students should be offered two rapid tests when they return.

All of these measures are in the end designed to save lives and to protect the NHS.

And for that very reason,

I must ask you to follow the rules where you live tomorrow night

and see in the New Year safely at home.

That means not meeting up with friends or family indoors, unless they are in the same household or support bubble,

and avoiding large gatherings of any kind.

We are still in the tunnel of this pandemic

the light however is not merely visible:

thanks to an extraordinary feat of British engineering if you like

the tunnel has been shortened

and we are moving faster through it, and that gives me great confidence about the future in the Spring

So for now let's double our efforts, let's follow the rules,

protect our NHS

and together make 2021 the year we leave this tunnel behind us.