

40 years of UK-Holy See full diplomatic relations

Thank you for joining us this morning to mark the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of full ambassadorial level diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and the Holy See. I am very grateful to His Eminence Cardinal Parolin for officiating this morning, and to all our con-celebrants, including Cardinal Nichols and Cardinal Brady and those who are visiting from the UK and Ireland. I also want to thank Cardinal Harvey and the Monks of the Abbey of St Paul's, the rector and vice rector of the Pontifical Bede College for their support for today's event. And our guests for taking time out of your busy schedules to be here.

Of course the history of the diplomatic relationship between the Holy See and the different parts of the United Kingdom dates back much further than the last century. As the presence today of the rectors of the different colleges attests. In fact, the first (English) Ambassador to the Holy See was John Sherwood, later Bishop of Durham, who was appointed in 1479 by King Edward IV to Pope Sixtus IV. He served three Kings, in a relationship with three different Popes, before dying here in Rome in 1494 and he was followed by at least three or four other Ambassadors until relations were broken on the death of Queen Mary in 1558. Going even further back there are records of at least two pre-Norman Kings of England who came to Rome for blessings from the then Pope – Alfred the Great, as a ten year old in 854 from Leo IV, and Cnut in 1027 from John XIX. From the Scottish court, one of the most famous missions to Rome was to Boniface VII in 1301, possibly lead by William Wallace although no one seems sure whether he got all the way here personally. It is entirely appropriate that we are today celebrating our relationship here, at the Basilica of St Paul's Outside the Walls – one of the four great Papal Basilicas and with deep historical associations with the United Kingdom that go back centuries. The English King Henry VIII was an honorary canon here, and St Paul's is known as the Papal Basilica that above all others celebrates ecumenism and the relationships across the Christian faith.

After the Reformation, relations began to thaw in the 19th century, as Europe sought to rebuild following the Napoleonic wars. It wasn't until 1914 that the United Kingdom restored its legation to the Holy See, at that time headed by a Minister. And then in 1982, an agreement was reached to upgrade the UK legation to a full embassy and on 1 April the British Ambassador Sir Mark Heath presented his credentials to St. John Paul II. At the same time, the Holy See's Apostolic Delegate to Britain, Archbishop Bruno Heim, was made the first Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to the Court of Saint James's. May I quote St John Paul II's words to Sir Mark Heath, to explain the significance of this historic moment: "It serves as a sign of the understanding and good will which characterise our diplomatic ties, and it affords a basis for expecting still closer collaboration in the future."

1982 marked also St John Paul II's pastoral visit to Britain, the first time

that a Pope had visited Britain. Twelve years ago Pope Benedict XVI paid an historic State visit to the United Kingdom, in September 2010. Her Majesty the Queen has met five different popes. Her first visit was over seventy years ago when she met Pius XII in 1951 when still Princess Elizabeth. And then of course she met John XXIII, followed by two state visits to John Paul II. Pope Benedict XVI was received by Her Majesty on his State Visit in 2010 and Her Majesty then visited Pope Francis when she was last in Rome.

Our collaboration today is ever more important in this interconnected world where it is critical to work together to promote peace, defend human rights, tackle global problems like climate change, modern slavery and all forms of trafficking, and to realise our shared ambition of the sustainable development goals. I mention achieving our joint ambitions, and a recent example of our work together was the Appeal [“Faith and Science: Towards COP26”](#) signed by Pope Francis with other Faith Leaders from around the world and then presented by the Pope to the COP President. This was the culmination of more than a year’s careful work between our Embassy, the Holy See and the Italian Embassy. The outcome was hugely impactful, influencing the leaders at COP26 but also the creating a great commitment to protecting the environment on the part of the faith leaders themselves.

As we start of fifth decade of diplomatic relations, I am very pleased that we are physically demonstrating the importance we place on our relationship by moving our Embassy, and the Ambassador’s Residence, much closer to the Vatican. Just a cricket ball’s throw from Saint Peter’s Square. This relocation will enable even better co-operation and collaboration on our shared values and interests.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the resulting war and human suffering unseen in Europe since the Second World War, shows us that our joint endeavours are ever more important today. We welcome the opportunity to continue to work together on the resolution of the conflict, the humanitarian impact of the crisis in Ukraine, and then hopefully, before long, on the rebuilding of that beautiful country.

I thank you all for your attendance here today and look forward to seeing what else we can achieve together.

[Work and Pensions Secretary speech: Movement to Work CEO Summit](#)

By thinking hard and digging deep in the roundtables you’re about have, how to turn ideas into action at this Summit, you could also be back next year to celebrate the great achievements that come about from the thinking that’s been made today here, across the Movement to Work network and beyond.

I really appreciate what you're doing to support so many talented young people to reach their potential.

And wow, Britain really does have talent. I am assured of that every time I walk through the doors of one of our jobcentres – I see the commitment from young people, determined to get on.

Getting great support from our work coaches, so they can get the skills, experience and connections they need to get a foot through the door with local employers in particular – getting that regular pay packet is paving the way to a rewarding future career.

And let's be candid, there are people out there as well who need a lot more encouraging to make sure they take advantage of the opportunities as well and there has been a mixture of things happening through Way to Work which I'll come onto.

But we do know that work is about more than money.

As well as financial independence and resilience, we know it improves overall wellbeing, mental health and self-worth.

Increased support following the pandemic

These benefits that work provides help prospects for many young people that were badly affected by the disruption caused two years ago when the pandemic hit.

Just as many were about to take their first tentative steps into the world of work –

Then out of the blue, the world itself changed – with most of the economy closed for business.

Now the furlough scheme was a great success in protecting millions of jobs through our furlough scheme.

And through our Plan for Jobs, I hope you can see that we've provided extra support to the highest risk groups, including young people.

So, we expanded and increased the intensive support offered by DWP to young jobseekers through our Youth Offer providing additional support to young people on Universal Credit.

We have extended that support until 2025.

And, indeed, widened eligibility for the extra support of the Youth Offer to 16 and 17 year olds, in addition to traditional 18 to 24 year olds.

Now, DWP has over 160 Youth Hubs open across Great Britain – providing skills, training and help to find a job, as well as support for other barriers to work like mental wellbeing or housing.

And through the Kickstart scheme, which is coming to end, over 152,000 young people have been able to take a confident first step into the workplace.

And when I hear young people talk about how they are now thriving in a job as a result, it really shows how this scheme has helped.

And as I say, although it is now concluding, its legacy, I hope, will last much longer.

Take Sam, who graduated in summer 2020 with a biology degree.

His ambition was to put his degree into practice and work in the conservation sector,

but he had almost given up hope due to the limited number of opportunities throughout the pandemic.

Sam's work coach told him about Kickstart and he secured a place with the Bumble Bee Conservation Trust in Edinburgh.

He received excellent mentorship during the placement, so he said.

When this ended, Sam was successful in getting a job with The Wildlife Trust and moved to take that on.

Then there was Maddi, she had found it hard to secure work due to the pandemic – had battled with her mental health after losing her job.

Maddi took on a Kickstart role of Assistant Community Coach at the football club she had supported since she was a child.

Supported by her work coaches at Epsom Jobcentre, she was able to land her dream role at AFC Wimbledon Foundation.

And they're just two success stories and I'm sure there are CEOs present here who know their organisations have taken on young people in similar roles.

In the summer, we are looking to showcase and celebrate some of those Kickstarters who got the most out of their experience, many have landed permanent jobs in the organisations they went to.

And indeed, others have recognised that certain careers aren't for them, but having that experience has been a huge platform indeed, as we said, the first rung of the ladder on getting into the world of work.

Although the Government funded the placements, I really want to recognise those employers who really took the scheme to heart.

While it's easy enough perhaps for us to hand over money, of course it's the time you gave, the opportunity costs in a way, that you chose to invest in these young people, and I really do appreciate that.

So a big thank you to those who did get involved.

Work placements are such an important way for young people to get experience and break free from the 'no experience, no job' cycle.

And I know Movement to Work has done a lot of work in this area – providing over 135,000 placements, I understand, since the network started.

Youth unemployment

What I do hope is that thanks to the measures we took to protect, support and, indeed, create jobs together with the vaccination programme, I hope you can see yourselves the economy is bouncing back and life is certainly returning to normal.

Unemployment is back to the low levels we actually saw before the pandemic and the number of 16 to 24 year olds who are now out of work has fallen by a quarter since summer 2020.

In fact, over the last year, over a quarter of a million [253,000] young people have moved into work.

And the ONS estimates that there 1.3 million vacancies – we have a buoyant labour market.

So there are many opportunities available for young people.

And want to continue to make sure they get the skills and support they need to move into the jobs that you employers and our wider economy, UK PLC, needs too.

My colleague Nadhim Zahawi continues to champion the T levels, designed with employers, are helping people in that 16 to 19 year olds bracket develop the technical knowledge and practical skills to thrive in the workplace.

And the new Institutes of Technology – I think we just announced another 9 – are offering higher level technical education to help close skills gaps in STEM areas.

Skills Bootcamps are helping young people over 19 to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer.

And the 'Get the Jump' Skills for Life campaign launched at the start of the year, bringing together, for the first time, all the education and training choices for young people in one place, with a specific spotlight on technical education routes to help them get the best start to their working lives.

Now this isn't in the script, but I do want to say that I've been working pretty hard over the last two years to try and get some change in thinking on the use of the apprenticeship levy, and Greene King has reminded me today they use all their apprenticeship levy, but I have to say there are a lot of employers out there who don't seem to.

So I want to encourage you to really take up the offer the Chancellor made in the Spring Statement to put across how the levy could work even better for

you and your organisation.

Because I'm determined that we do take this opportunity to boost the skills of people, not just going into work for the first time, but also those in work so they can progress in work as well, and candidly you are the best people to make that happen.

Way to Work

Now, filling posts means fulfilling potential. So at DWP, we are helping young people on Universal Credit to move to jobs more quickly – or certainly that's the aim of – our Way to Work campaign.

We're giving people more dedicated face-to-face time with Work Coaches and better connections with local employers to improve their chances of finding work.

And in particular I want to thank Marriot, Bupa, M&S, British Heart Foundation and the Army, who are members of Movement to Work and guarantee interviews as part of that scheme.

It's really helpful because right now we've been through a situation where we've subsidised jobs through Kickstart, business incentives to take on apprentices.

Underpinning this, we now in a situation with so many vacancies that we have to employ our ABC approach – any job now, gives you a Better tomorrow to will help you build a future Career.

This is a win-win. Meaning a young person can start getting the practical experience from a job sooner to then take a further step forward into another job.

And for an employer, it means they can get their vacancies filled.

Now, hundreds of job fairs will be taking place over the next few months for people of any age and at any stage of their lives. I was at one just the other week at Blackpool Pleasure Beach. Hundreds of people came.

And employers used it to tap into local talent through jobcentres to fill their vacancies – and I'm pleased to report that 65 people walked away with a brand new job.

And that is just one example of what is happening across the country as we invite employers to come into our jobcentres and meet them in every part of the country.

So I do want to invite you all here, you all have professional HR, I recognise that, you'll have your own systems.

But do consider people who are claimants, who are customers at jobcentres as people who you could help into work, and take advantage of that.

Support for disadvantaged young people – prison leavers

One of the things that I'm really impressed by is your constant focus on youth, and one of the challenges in the way of being in Government is also the fact we have people with all sorts of levels that we need to try and help.

It so happens that today I was at the Employment Advisory Board in HMP Warred Hill, at my constituency in Suffolk.

And it was fascinating to hear about somebody who had got a job form there, who actually didn't have the opportunity to come to the meeting today, but they talked about how employment was the light at the end of the tunnel – that kept them going.

And we're very keen as a Government to make sure that prisoners go straight from prison to getting a pay packet and we need to continue to try and work on that.

Now those prisoners put themselves in a bad place, but they still need a handout and a help up in order to make sure reoffending is not their preferred career in the future.

Now I appreciate you're often helping young people who may well have been the victims of those people currently in prison.

And I encourage you, and really commend you for what you are doing, recognising that people have not always have the privileged opportunities that we may have enjoyed, not by luck but by focus of a mentor or other people who helped us on our way.

And I appreciate what you are doing that regard.

A look ahead

I think one of the key challenges you will be facing is actually the challenges of moving to hybrid working.

And one of the things that's clear from speaking to young people: they really don't want to work remotely.

They really do want to be in a factory, in office or in a setting where they are with other people.

And I'm very conscious you will have much more senior, higher executives or indeed people with families and others who actually enjoy working from home and want that hybrid.

And I think it's really important as you think forward in the next few months, couple of years about how this situation evolves to make sure that the pipeline of talent you're bringing into your organisations now, can really carry on going up the ladder.

And if you think back on some of the experiences you would have had, about the benefit of absorbing, of learning from the senior people around you, I think that's something that not just employers here today but employers right across the country are thinking about.

It's all well and good when you haven't had changes in your team, your glue is already there, you've already had shared experiences, but I'm sure, a bit like myself at DWP, having new people come into our department you can start to see where that is missing, and the connectivity isn't there.

So for the people you're helping move into work, I know you are talking about helping move up in work as well. To that end I encourage you think about that carefully too.

So, can I just say a big thank you to Movement to Work for inviting me along today.

We do need to continue to work together with a whole range of organisations.

Employers.

Youth organisations.

Training providers.

Charities.

And informed by the Youth Summit in November, where young people shared their experiences about the barriers to employment they have faced, and this CEO Summit brings those views and voices to us all as we seek a way to break down those barriers.

I am sure you will have a very productive event today and that the discussions you have will spark the next set of solutions to go even further to help young people into work.

Gillian – thank you again for inviting me.

[UN Human Rights Council 49: UK statement for the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Cambodia](#)

World news story

The UK delivered this statement welcoming Cambodia's long-standing cooperation with the OHCHR on human rights and progress on economic, social and cultural rights.



UK Government

Thank you, Mr President.

The United Kingdom would like to thank Professor Muntarbhorn for his update on the human rights situation in Cambodia.

We are concerned that the judiciary is being used to stifle debate, restrict media freedom and encourage self-censorship. The UK advocates that the Royal Government of Cambodia embrace an open dialogue with all Cambodians including civil society, political parties and communities ahead of the local and national elections in 2022 and 2023. And we urge the Government to embrace and encourage an open and inclusive discourse.

The UK welcomes Cambodia's long-standing cooperation with the OHCHR on human rights and progress on economic, social and cultural rights. We see this as a positive indication of their commitment to engage on human rights issues. We remain committed to engaging with Cambodia to support a human rights-based approach to development, including through Cambodia's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2022.

Special Rapporteur,

What measures do you believe the Government needs to take to ensure that political parties can fully and fairly participate in local and national elections in 2022 and 2023?

Thank you.

Published 29 March 2022

[Home improvements to better protect Allesley homes from flooding](#)

The home improvements will see flood protection measures, such as new doors and flood-adapted air bricks to minimise flood damage, installed in the Washbrook Lane and Butt Lane areas.

This work is part of the wider Allesley Flood Risk Management Scheme which is enabled by funding secured by the Environment Agency, Coventry City Council and the Regional Flood & Coastal Committee.

Charles Chandler, Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager from the Environment Agency said:

We're pleased to be able to work with local people to install these property flood resilience measures. Such simple home improvements can really work to reduce the risk of homes flooding and allow people to get back to normal after any flood.

Property level flood resilience measures are a core part of the Environment Agency's long term vision for how we will better protect and prepare homes against the risk of flooding, so it's exciting to bring these improvements to the people of Allesley.

Rita and Raymond Taylor are among the residents who have benefited from the measures. The couple have lived in the area for more than 50 years and moved into their bungalow in the area 16 years ago. Their home has flooded twice in the past 10 years.

Rita, who is celebrating her 80th birthday soon, said:

We've had new doors and air bricks fitted and it's fantastic to have peace of mind in case there is another flood. The first flood we had was quite bad and it was frightening as in a bungalow you don't have anywhere else to go.

The doors look exactly the same as the ones we had before. They are a bit stiffer to close but that's because they provide the closeness that's needed to stop water from getting in. It's great

that this has been offered as we couldn't have afforded to do this ourselves.

Cllr Patricia Hetherington, cabinet member for city services at Coventry City Council said:

I'm really pleased that so many residents have taken up the offer of flood protection measures for their homes from the Environment Agency.

These measures will go alongside wider natural flood management work to help reduce the flooding. Together, I hope local people will see and feel a difference during the next weather event, whenever that comes.

The area has been affected on several occasions when the nearby River Sherbourne has flooded. Flooding has occurred in 2007, 2008, 2012 and 2016, with June to September 2007 being one of the wettest June to September periods on record in the Coventry area.

The Environment Agency is also working with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust to help reduce the risk of flooding in the area through Natural Flood Management (NFM) techniques. These include building 'leaky barriers', planting trees, gapping up hedges and creating new pools.

This investment forms part of the Government's £5.2 billion investment in flood and coastal erosion risk management in England over the next six years. This long-term commitment will better protect hundreds of thousands of properties, including homes, businesses, schools and hospitals. This record investment will help the nation 'build back better' by making properties more resilient to flooding, and 'build back greener' by working with nature to make us more resilient to climate change.

Members of the public can [sign up for free flood warnings](#) and ensure they [know what to do in case of flooding](#).

You can check your flood risk, sign up for free flood warnings and keep up to date with the latest situation at [GOV.UK](#), call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or follow [@EnvAgencyMids](#) on Twitter for the latest flood updates.

If you are experiencing flooding, you should report this to our free 24-hour incident hotline: 0800 80 70 60 to allow us to assess the situation and respond appropriately.

Notes to editors

- Flood Resilient doors being installed provide a stronger seal than standard doors and are steel reinforced with locking mechanisms along the side as well as across the bottom to give greater compression. An additional hinge located at the bottom of the door also aids

compression.

- The special airbricks being installed have a self-activating gate which will automatically shut off to prevent water entering the property when there is a flood. They are designed to replace standard airbricks and allows air to freely pass through when not in flood conditions whilst an integrated mesh stops insects and debris from entering the property.
- The Allesley scheme will see 43 homes and business better protected from the risk of flooding and along side property resilience measures, natural flood management measures installed in the catchment which to date include over 50 leaky barriers, 5 retention pools, over 1500m of planted hedgerow and 70 trees with further measures planned later in the year.
- NFM techniques are measures that work with nature to contribute towards reducing the impact of flooding. Measures reduce surface run-off of rainwater and slow the flow of water once it enters watercourses. NFM is a low carbon alternative to more traditional flood defence measures such as flood walls. NFM can increase carbon capture and storage whilst construction practices look to use locally sourced materials and local contractors to reduce carbon emissions.
- For every £1 spent improving protection from flooding and coastal erosion, we avoid around £5 of property damages. This long-term commitment will make homes, businesses and infrastructure more resilient to the increasing impacts of climate change.
- The Capital Programme will also prove central to the Environment Agency reaching its target of becoming a net zero organisation by 2030 – by embracing innovative ways of working that minimise the carbon emissions we produce, and the carbon produced through our supply chain, when we build flood defences.
- The investment across the country will help enable communities adapt to the future risk of climate crisis.
- Using partnership funding enables us to secure investment beyond levels affordable to central government alone and enables more local choice, while encouraging innovative, cost-effective options where communities may play a greater role.

National diversity accreditation sign up – a first for the UK nuclear sector

The Programme and Project Partners at Sellafield are proud to announce they have signed up to undertake the Investors in Diversity accreditation from the National Centre for Diversity (NCD).

The partnership is the first in the nuclear sector to pursue the diversity award and hopes to set a precedent for many others to follow.

The accreditation is recognised as the national equality standard providing organisations with a bespoke approach to embedding equality, diversity, inclusion and fairness in all that it does.

The programme focuses on the NCD's FREDIE principles – fairness, respect, equality, diversity, inclusion and engagement.

The Programme and Project Partners currently have a team of around 1,400 people drawn from the partner organisations and is 3 years into a 20-year contract. The team is set to increase to 1,900 people over the next year.

Programme and Project Partners managing director, Duncan Elliott said:

We're almost 3 years into our partnership and recognise we can do more to promote equality, diversity and inclusion across our team.

The Investors in Diversity accreditation will provide us with a framework to create an environment where all our employees can thrive and one which attracts the talent we need to deliver some of the UK's most challenging infrastructure projects.

We cannot reach our full potential without maximising the talents of all and we're 100% committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across the programme. This is a positive step forward for our partnership, our employees, the talent we will attract and the wider nuclear sector.

The partners first step in working towards the accreditation will be to conduct a workforce wide cultural audit to establish where it is right now in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion, and then, where it wants to be.

Solat Chaudhry, chief executive of the National Centre for Diversity, said:

For us the most critical element of diversity is not where businesses are on your journey, it's where they want to be.

By undertaking the accreditation, the partners are demonstrating their commitment to improving levels of fairness, respect, equity, diversity, inclusion and engagement.

Working towards the accreditation award is a visible internal and external sign that the partners are committed to achieving sustainable, meaningful positive action. We look forward to working together.

More information

The Programme and Project Partners is a long-term partnership between:

- KBR
- Jacobs
- Morgan Sindall Infrastructure
- Doosan Babcock

Sellafield Ltd is the 5th partner.

The partnership was formed in 2019 to deliver major infrastructure projects at the Sellafield site over the next 20 years.

[National Centre for Diversity](#)

[Diversity accreditation](#)