

Speech: Karen Bradley's speech at the G7 Culture Ministers in Florence

Let me begin by thanking our Florentine and Italian hosts.

My compliments to you for organising the first meeting of G7 culture ministers – and for your wonderful hospitality.

On behalf of everyone from my country, my profound thanks to everyone here for the solidarity you have shown us following the terrorist murders that took place last week – right at the heart of where British politicians and our staff work.

The death of a very brave police officer serves as a tragic reminder of the debt we owe to those who keep us safe, including at events like this. Much of their work may go unnoticed, but we are extremely grateful for it.

What a pleasure it is to be here in Florence. It really is a joy to behold. Everywhere you turn you see something charming and beautiful.

This is a very, very special city – the birthplace of the Renaissance.

But great buildings, sculpture, and paintings cannot endure through magic alone. They have to be cherished. Here in Firenze, we can see that this is possible and why it matters.

So it is heartening that there is such unity among governments. Today we declare our shared responsibility to protect the world's treasures.

There is an urgent need for action. We are witnessing looting and vandalism on a heart-breaking scale. Not only do these assaults help finance terrorism, they are a calculated attempt to destroy people's history, culture, and identity.

It cannot be allowed.

The United Kingdom is with you all as we confront this evil.

Last June, we opened our [£30 million Cultural Protection Fund](#). This will support projects that safeguard and promote cultural heritage overseas.

The three goals that the Fund will assist are Cultural Heritage Protection; Capacity Building and Training; and Advocacy and Education.

The British Council is managing the Cultural Protection Fund in partnership with my government department – the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

£3 million has gone to the British Museum Emergency Heritage Management Training Scheme in Iraq. It means that the skills we have developed in this country can support the Iraqis in their efforts to protect their cultural

heritage.

Iraqi site inspectors, excavators, and experts in documentation have been shown round historic sites in England and learned English. The first group finished their field training in Iraq in November and are now applying advanced techniques they learned through the British Museum.

This project has shown what the Cultural Protection Fund can help accomplish.

The United Kingdom is also about to ratify the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and accede to its two Protocols.

UK Armed Forces already operate within the terms of the Convention, but now it will be enshrined in law.

Our Armed Forces are creating a Cultural Property Protection Unit to make sure that respect for cultural property is part of training and operations. The Unit – nicknamed the Monuments Men for reasons that will be familiar to fans of Matt Damon – will also investigate and report issues and offences.

We are keen to learn and share best practice with our allies, very much including the Italian Armed Forces.

The Cultural Property Act of Parliament that we passed this year contains a number of vital measures.

It creates a variety of criminal offences; regulates the use of the Blue Shield as a protective emblem; and introduces a legal regime that makes it illegal to deal in cultural property that has been unlawfully exported from an occupied territory.

Please do not think that the UK leaving the European Union means that we are turning our back on the rest of Europe or the rest of the world.

The very opposite is true: the government that I represent has a vision of a genuinely global Britain. And we will do all we can to help protect the world's treasures and places.

For let us not doubt, for one moment, that this affects us all.

Imagine, if you can bear to, what it would be like if terrorists stormed the Galleria dell'Accademia and destroyed Michelangelo's David.

Do you suppose it would only hurt Florentines and Italians? No, the entire world would share in the agony and outrage.

David represents religion, civil liberties, the ability of the weak to triumph over the strong, the inherent value of beauty, and one of the most magnificent periods of human history.

In that sense, then, David belongs to us all, and we all have an obligation to protect him.

Art raises human beings above barbarism. That is why barbaric people hate it so much and want to obliterate it.

We will not let them.

News story: Primary assessment consultation launched today

We have launched a public [consultation exercise](#) about the future of the primary assessment system in England. Details are included in a [statement](#) made to Parliament today by the Secretary of State for Education, Justine Greening.

The consultation proposals aim to ensure that we establish a stable, trusted assessment system that supports all children to fulfil their potential, whatever their background. A [short video](#) introduces the main consultation themes.

It sets out wide-ranging proposals for improving the primary assessment system. These include consideration of the best starting point from which to measure pupils' progress, how to ensure the assessment system is proportionate, and how to improve statutory end of key stage teacher assessments.

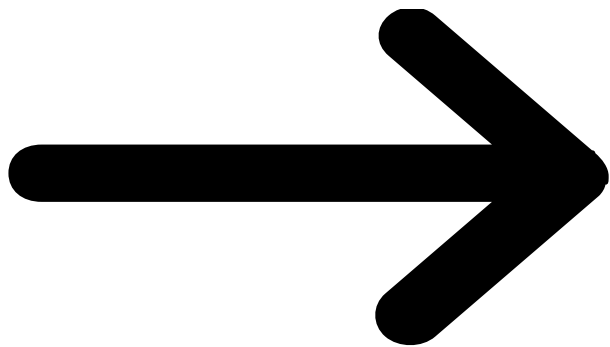
A [parallel consultation](#), also launched today, is asking for views on the recommendations of the independent Rochford Review. The recommendations focus on the future of statutory assessment arrangements for pupils working below the standard of national curriculum tests at the end of key stage 1 (year 2) and key stage 2 (year 6).

We want to hear the views of as many people as possible with an interest in the future of primary education on the proposals we are putting forward in these consultation exercises. In particular, we want to hear from headteachers and teachers, to draw on their insight and experience.

Of course, children at the end of key stage 1 or key stage 2 will be taking national curriculum tests in May. It is important to note that these tests will not be affected by the proposals being published today. [Further details](#) for parents about this year's tests are now available.

Mesh implant report a 'whitewash'

30 Mar 2017



The Scottish Conservatives have described the Scottish Government report into mesh implants as a 'whitewash'.

This was after the report claimed that the procedure was an appropriate procedure for women despite the many cases of severe suffering that it has caused.

It comes after several sufferers and an expert clinician resigned from the review as they were concerned about evidence being buried.

Scottish Conservative deputy leader Jackson Carlaw MSP said:

"This final publication which bears little if any resemblance to the interim review published last year, and it is now clear why some of those involved felt that they had to resign from the review.

"It is a whitewash of the damning evidence that was received by the Parliament, and is a disservice to the many women who are still suffering as a result of these implants.

"It is certainly not a justification for lifting the suspension on mesh implants, and we need to ensure that the procedures are still banned until further evidence is taken.

"What is especially disappointing is that the SNP have chosen to hide the publication of this report in the final day before recess amongst a string of other announcements.

"They seem to be determined to bury bad news rather than allow parliament to properly scrutinise this report."

Scottish Conservative shadow secretary for health Donald Cameron MSP said:

"Today's statement will have done little to reassure the many women who have suffered as a result of mesh implants.

"Given that the effects of the treatment cannot occur until years after the

procedure, we need to ensure that we closely track all of those patients who undergo it.

“That is why we’re calling for the Scottish Government to commit to using a comprehensive and independent database, to allow a wider range of medical professionals to report adverse incidents and concerns.

“Only then will we be able to fully understand the true extent of the damage being done by mesh implants.”

News story: The AAIB has sent a team to North Wales

[unable to retrieve full-text content]The AAIB has sent a team to North Wales to investigate a helicopter accident.

Kathryn Bishop confirmed as first chair of the Welsh Revenue Authority

In just over a year, Wales will raise taxes for the first time in 800 years when stamp duty land tax and landfill tax are devolved. Land transaction tax and landfill disposals tax will replace these two taxes in Wales from 1 April 2018.

The Tax Collection and Management (Wales) Act, which was passed by the National Assembly in April 2016, established devolved tax arrangements in Wales, including the creation of the Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA) to collect and manage devolved Welsh taxes.

The WRA is the first non-ministerial department of the Welsh Government and will become operational in April 2018. Over the next four years, the WRA will collect more than £1bn of tax revenues.

Confirming Ms Bishop’s appointment, Professor Drakeford said: “In just over a year, Wales will be responsible for collecting and managing our own taxes when land transaction tax and landfill disposals tax are introduced.

“We are making significant progress in our preparations for tax devolution and the WRA will play an integral part in this.

“It will be responsible for collecting and managing more than £1bn of tax revenues over the next four years – revenue which is crucial for our public services.

“I am pleased to be able to confirm Kathryn Bishop’s appointment as the first chair of the WRA. Kathryn brings a wealth of experience to the role and will provide the WRA with the leadership and vision to ensure a smooth transition as Wales takes on tax powers.”

Ms Bishop said:

“I am delighted to be appointed as chair of the WRA – a new public body with an important function in Wales – and I look forward to working with the implementation team and the stakeholders.”

Ms Bishop’s appointment as chair of the WRA follows a fair and open recruitment exercise regulated by the Commission for Public Appointments. A pre-appointment hearing by the National Assembly’s Finance Committee endorsed her appointment.