

News story: 6 weeks until the pound stops being round

Baroness Neville-Rolfe will pay tribute to the Royal Mint's role as a global leader in the production of coins and medals – exporting to an average of 60 countries every year.

The visit comes ahead of a major export conference in Cardiff due to take place next month, celebrating Wales' position as a leading exporter for goods and services across the world.

The minister will be accompanied on the visit to the factory in Llantrisant, Wales by the Welsh Secretary Alan Cairns.

Commercial Secretary to the Treasury Baroness Neville Rolfe said:

The introduction of a new pound coin, the most secure coin in the world, is a historic event. The fact this coin is made in Wales makes it even more special as it underlines the importance of the Union.

Our message is clear: if you have a round one pound coin sitting at home or in your wallet, you need to spend it or return it to your bank before 15 October.

Alun Cairns, Secretary of State for Wales, said:

It is particularly exciting to get a sneak preview of history being made today at the Royal Mint as the new pound coin is prepared for circulation. The presence of the Royal Mint in Wales as the creator of our currency – as well as being a major employer – underlines how central Wales is to the union.

The Royal Mint is also blazing a trail as an exporter. The UK government will shortly hold a conference for exporters in Wales, and companies like the Royal Mint are a great example to follow.

This is the first time the £1 coin has been changed in over 30 years. Around £1.3 billion worth of coins are stored in savings jars across the country, and the current £1 coin accounts for almost a third of these.

Therefore ministers are reminding the public of the importance of all old £1 coins being returned before 15 October 2017 when they lose their legal tender status.

The new 12-sided £1 coin will be the most secure coin in the world. It boasts

several new security features, including a hologram, to prevent counterfeits, which cost taxpayers and businesses millions every year.

Speech: “Not intent simply with killing innocents, terrorists seek to destabilise, demoralise, and disrupt our way of life.”

Thank you, Mr President

I am most grateful for the analysis shared by our briefers this morning. And I join others in paying tribute to you, Mr Minister, for your leadership in bringing this important issue to our attention.

Over the past decade, the terrorist threat has evolved. We face increasingly complex threats as terrorists acquire new knowledge and new technology. Not intent simply with killing innocents, terrorists seek to destabilise, demoralise, and disrupt our way of life.

Critical infrastructure, be it a transport system, a communications hub, or a power grid represents an attractive target for these sinister actors. The fact that those responsible for the attack on the Brussels Metro and airport last March had also invested time in surveillance of a Belgian nuclear scientist should concern us all. We must redouble our vigilance to ensure that we are ready to defend the systems that allow our societies to function.

So we wholeheartedly welcome the action taken by this Council today in adopting resolution 2341. That resolution raises the profile of this important issue; it calls on states to improve preparedness; and it strengthens our cooperation in protecting the security of our people and our critical infrastructure.

If we are to truly tackle this threat, I believe we need to focus, Mr President, on three things: preparation, protection and partnerships. So firstly, preparation

It's vital that plans for protecting our critical infrastructure are comprehensively developed, maintained and tested. We echo the call of the resolution for states to develop their own strategies to prepare and respond to any attack.

Threats to our infrastructure can come from many sources: terrorism, criminality or natural hazards. In reducing the risk to our infrastructure, the United Kingdom takes an 'all-risks' approach. That means developing plans

that can be used to respond to many types of disruption or threats to life. Measures taken by states to prevent unlawful or criminal interference in our infrastructure can also serve to help prevent terrorist attacks. It's in part because of the strong measures we have taken that terrorist threats to our infrastructure are being mitigated.

Secondly, protection. The threat to some elements of our national infrastructure may be aspirational, but there is one area where the threat is very real and very high: and that is transport. As recent reports from the UN Secretary General show, there continues to be a serious and enduring threat from international terrorism to our transport networks – specifically to civil aviation.

Three billion passengers reach their destination by air every year. This past year has offered us too many reminders of the risks they face. Attacks on airports in Brussels and Istanbul. The destruction of the Russian Metrojet aircraft over Sinai. The explosion on board a Daallo Airways flight from Mogadishu.

It was to combat these threats that the United Kingdom authored resolution 2309, and today echo its call on States to work with the International Civil Aviation Organisation. Working together we can ensure not only that international security standards keep pace with the terrorist threat, but also, crucially, that they are implemented effectively on the ground.

Finally, partnerships. The critical infrastructure that we need to protect is largely owned by the private sector, and can also form part of complex international networks and supply chains. Preparation and protection of infrastructure are simply good intentions if we fail to work across sectors to achieve them.

Each side has its part to play. Private companies are responsible for ensuring that their infrastructure is protected and that essential services are maintained, just as governments have an obligation to ensure that industry is managing these risks fully and responsibly.

And as this resolution identifies, stronger international partnerships are vital at a time when the functioning of infrastructure relies on cross border networks and supply chains. The sharing of information, early warning networks and expertise will strengthen our common approach.

Mr President,

This Council needs to stay abreast of the evolution of the terrorist threat, and to respond to it. Just as we act to prevent conflict, we should also act pre-emptively to prevent terrorism. Today, we have put another building block in place to strengthen our common effort. Because of our efforts, terrorists intent on stirring chaos have another hurdle to cross. Because of our efforts, our societies are a little safer than they were yesterday.

Thank you.

Press release: Foreign Secretary to visit The Gambia and Ghana

From:

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Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson will meet with President Barrow and President Akufo-Addo on a two-day trip to West Africa.

The Foreign Secretary will visit The Gambia and Ghana this week on 14-15 February 2017. This is the first recorded visit to The Gambia by a Foreign Secretary. He will meet President Barrow of The Gambia and President Akufo-Addo of Ghana to discuss the key opportunities and challenges facing each country. The Foreign Secretary will say Global Britain and its partnerships are growing, not shrinking, around the world as demonstrated by the Commonwealth's strength.

In The Gambia in addition to meeting with President Barrow he will visit the UK-funded Medical Research Council and speak to Chevening scholars and employees and employers in the tourism industry – a huge employer in the country.

In Ghana the Foreign Secretary will visit the award-winning Blue Skies company, meet business leaders and young entrepreneurs supported by the Department for International Development's ENGINE project, and meet with "Rising Black Stars" highlighting both countries' extensive cultural ties.

Ahead of the visit, the Foreign Secretary said:

I'm delighted to be the first Foreign Secretary to visit Gambia this week and delighted to have a chance to meet the newly elected President Barrow and President Akufo-Addo of Ghana. Their elections highlight the continuing strengthening of democracy in West Africa.

I am also very pleased that Gambia wants to rejoin the Commonwealth and we will ensure this happens in the coming months. The strength of our partnerships show that Global Britain is growing in influence and activity around the world.

[Ruth: A free-trading Britain can face down SNP plans for break-up](#)

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13 Feb 2017



An “outward-looking, free-trading” Britain can provide people across the UK with the security and opportunity they crave, Ruth Davidson will say in a keynote speech this evening.

Saying the country must reject the path of “economic nationalism”, she will set out a vision for a country that “pushes at our boundaries, instead of building walls”.

And while the SNP has sought to use the UK’s vote to leave the EU as reason to ramp up its campaign for another referendum, Ruth will say that – in contrast – it has made the case for Scottish independence “weaker and more illogical than ever”.

Nonetheless, she will say the UK needs to face up to an SNP government which has watched the tactics of the Leave campaign, learned from them, and is now “itching to get its own campaign bus into gear”.

She will say that a key argument against independence will be on trade – pointing to how Scotland’s trade with the UK is worth four times that of exports to the EU.

Voting to leave the UK in response to Brexit would be akin to “stubbing your toe, to then amputate your foot”.

In tonight’s address, she will also say it’s vital politicians respect the result of referendums, and had Scotland voted for separation in 2014, she wouldn’t have denied it nor demanded a re-run.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

“The SNP is a formidable political operation which – I suspect – has learnt from the tactics of the Leave campaign last year and is itching to get its own campaign bus into gear as we speak.

“So my view is that the case for the Union must be made afresh, and we have to persuade people once again that our own Union of nations still works for us all.

“And there is something of a Brexit paradox here.

“Because while Brexit has provided the means for Nicola Sturgeon to crank up her independence campaign once more – it has also made that case weaker and more illogical than ever.

“As we learned only last month in official Scottish Government statistics, trade within the UK internal market is worth four times to Scotland than trade with the EU.

“The logic is therefore clear.

“If everyone in Scotland agrees that free trade with Europe is important – and we do – it is literally impossible to deny that trade with the rest of the UK matters four times as much.

“But rather than accept that logic, the same old nationalist contortions are applied.

“It is already cranking up the grievance machine in an attempt to push people towards the exit door.”

[Speech: A speech on criminal justice reform by the Secretary of State for Justice](#)

It's great to be here at the CSJ – an organisation at the forefront of social reform. Pleased that they are opening a new Criminal Justice Unit.

Today I would like to set out my views on sentencing and the prison population. There is already a lively debate on this subject and some of the key protagonists in this debate are in this room today from Lord Ramsbotham to Frances Crook; from Nick Hardwick to Michael Gove.

This issue boils down to four distinct areas:

- sentences are too long
- prisons are too overcrowded to work
- the wrong people are in prison
- management of the prison population at the moment, whether it is IPP or recall, isn't good enough

I will take these points in turn.

Firstly there has been quite a lot of talk recently about a political arms race, driving up sentences.

People are saying that additional legislation and guidelines have led to longer sentences being handed down by the courts.

It is argued that this has increased the prison population leading to where we are today.

We are accused of being an outlier in terms of the number of people we send to prison.

Well first of all I want to point out that for the last six years our prison population has been stable. The prison population has remained relatively stable since 2010 – at around 85,000 people.

It is true that the population rose for three successive decades before that – with a sharp increase of 20,000 places – or 31% – between 2000 and 2010.

But if you compare Britain with other major liberal democracies, we are fairly mid table when it comes to custodial sentences. England and Wales have 148 people per 100,000 in prison. Australia has 151, Germany 78, and France 95. The US has 698.

The second point I want to make is that it is not true that rates of imprisonment have gone up across the board. And it is also not true that we have seen sentence inflation across the board. There have been fewer shorter sentences being handed out for offences like shoplifting and there are proportionally fewer people in prison for those type of offences. In 2015 our courts handed out 9,000 fewer short-term sentences than they did in 2010.

What we have seen is significant increases in sentences in particular areas.

In fact the biggest driver for prison growth in the last twenty years has been the exposure, pursuit and punishment of sexual offences and crimes of violence, and a toughening up of sentences for these crimes.

This is down to a wholly welcome improvement in attitude to victims of sex crimes across society. It has meant more victims are coming forward, they are being taken more seriously by the criminal justice system, and they are dealt with a greater understanding.

I think we all recall how rape victims were treated in the 1980s. They all too often experienced rough justice – where their lifestyles were as much on trial as the crime itself.

The number of rape cases reaching the courts increased by 50% between 1980 and 1987 but the number of convictions remained static. It was a time when a young woman could be jailed for refusing to give evidence in an assault case against her partner. And when a man convicted of raping a 17-year old girl could be given a £2,000 fine on the grounds that the victim was guilty of

“contributory negligence”.

Right through the 1980s, domestic violence remained a crime that largely stayed behind closed doors and child sex abuse was rife but it rarely attracted a punishment that today we would consider suitable for such a heinous act.

Now the situation is changing.

Incredibly before 2005, rape of a child under 13 was not even a specific offence. In 2005 a man would be sentenced to an average of 4.8 years for raping a child under the age of 13. By 2015 the average sentence given out for this terrible crime had more than doubled. And the average sentence given out for all sexual offences has increased by 50% over the last decade.

But it is not only sex offences, although those are the sentences which have gone out the most. The courts are handing out longer sentences for offences of violence against the person and robbery, up by 10% and 23% respectively since 2005.

What we are seeing is more of these crimes being brought to justice and the result has been an increase in the number in prison for these serious offences.

Since 2000 there has been a 29% increase in those sentenced to custody for robbery and a 75% increase for violence against a person.

And there has been a 140% increase in the number of sexual offenders in prison.

This has led to a change in the make-up of our prison population – from two in five being prisoners convicted of violent, sexual or drug offences in 1995 to three in five now. There has been a huge difference in the people we send to prison.

Compared with 2010, there are now 3,000 more sex offenders in prison. Despite the fact that the overall prison population remains stable.

So what we are seeing is fewer people being sent to prison on those short sentences but more people in for some of those serious crimes.

This is being reflected in what we are seeing in our courts, with some courts spending half their time dealing with sexual offence cases.

This sea change is happening because our society is changing. We have gained some understanding of the seriousness of these crimes and more victims are having the confidence to come forward and put their case. And it is happening because we are catching and convicting more violent offenders and giving them longer sentences that better reflect the seriousness of their crimes.

This is the right thing for victims and the right thing for the British public.

We should be proud that we live in a society that no longer shames victims of rape; that is prepared to confront child sex abuse, and has brought domestic violence out in the open. But there is more we can do.

So I am going to take action to spare victims of sexual abuse the trauma of giving evidence in open court in criminal cases. In family courts I will end the appalling practice of domestic abuse victims being cross-examined by their attacker.

We are also looking at the operation of Section 41 in rape cases, where in exceptional cases at the moment the victim's past history can be asked about. I do not want this to be used as an excuse to shame victims of serious crimes.

We have come a long way as a society but we face new challenges like social media. We must not allow the clock be turned back in terms of attitudes to sexual crime. I will not let this happen under my watch.

I want now to address the second issue that people have raised and that is that our prisons are simply too full for meaningful reform to take place.

It is true that reoffending rates are too high and that our prisons are too violent. I acknowledge that. But the wrong way to address the problem would be to shorten sentences or to release offenders earlier.

That would be reckless and endanger the public.

And it would restrict the freedom of the independent judiciary to choose the most appropriate sentence for each offender.

The answer to overcrowding is not to cut prisoner numbers in half.

It is to make sure we have the right resources, the right workforce, the right buildings and the right regimes to reform offenders and turn their lives around.

That is exactly what I am doing.

The Prison and Courts Bill, due to be published this month, will for the first time enshrine in law that reforming offenders is a key purpose of prison and that the Secretary of State has a responsibility for delivering it. That has never been in our law before. At the moment, the duty of the Justice Secretary is to house offenders – I don't think that is good enough. We have to be about turning people's lives around.

This change will usher in major reforms. The way I see it the prison system now is a bit like education was before we had Ofsted, before we had league tables, before we knew what was going on in schools.

What I want to see in our prisons is the same type of scrutiny, the same type of openness, and the same focus on making things better and really reforming people while they are inside.

I want to transform our prisons from places of violence and despair to places of self-improvement and hope where all prisoners are given the chance to lead a better life. Because I believe that everybody is capable of reform.

Governors will have greater power to make the changes they need to drive reform. And prison officers will have more responsibility to challenge prisoners to change, to get them off drugs and into training and work, and to be there in times of crisis.

I want us to look at work from the outside in. We have some fantastic employers in this room who want to be part of this. I want to see us being those employers into prisons, for people to start apprenticeships while they are in prison, to get a job when they are on the outside, to get housing on the outside. That is the way we will reduce reoffending. That is the way that bring down our appalling reoffending rates.

At the moment half of all people in our prisons, when they leave, will reoffend within a year. That is not good enough. And as we see the number of first time offenders go down we want to see the number of people going through our system go down. If they go to prison I want them only in there once.

We also have to deal with the levels of violence and self-harm in our prisons. That is why as well as investing in reform and giving more powers to governors and creating a new frontline agency – Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service – we are putting an extra £100m a year into the frontline and will take on 2,500 more frontline officers. This will enable us to have a caseload of one officer for every six offenders. That will be about keeping those people safe, challenging them to change their ways and also supporting them in their time through prison so that they can lead a successful life on the outside. At the moment we don't have enough officers to do that and I fully acknowledge that is the case.

Today we have Natasha Porter in the audience who is leading a fantastic new graduate programme called Unlocked. It's about getting the best graduates into prisons to help us show that being a prison officer is a noble profession. It is an important profession and as vital to society as teaching, nursing and being a police officer.

And I am pleased to see it is getting a good response. We are at the start of the process recruiting officers. We are not there yet and it will take time but the fact that this scheme got 1,000 people interested within the first 24 hours shows it can be done and that together we can make it work.

So while Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service focuses on reform, it will be the Secretary of State's duty to hold the Service to account for the progress offenders make on getting off drugs and getting the education and skills they need to get a job on the outside. I am also beefing up the powers of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons so that they have the teeth when a prison isn't working to intervene and make the Secretary of State act.

As I have said before, a prisoner's family is the most effective resettlement

agency. Thanks to the evidence collected by Lord Farmer's Review, Governors will have access to comprehensive data to help them decide what works best to bolster positive family ties. I also want to congratulate the Centre for Social Justice for highlighting the importance of the role of fathers. I think we must always remember that as we look at the justice system because the involvement of fathers is vital.

It will take time to bed in but once we have our reforms in place we will be able to measure progress, learn from the best and, when necessary, intervene to turn around failing prisons.

This change will not happen in weeks or months, it will take time and determination to deliver but as a society we simply cannot afford to put this off any longer. All of the people in this room are vital to this change. I am grateful for your work.

Profound changes in our prison population make the need for reform even tougher and even more critical. We have a challenging time ahead, but an incredibly important time ahead too and I am proud to be leading the Ministry of Justice at this time.

I am equally determined to address the factors that fuel prolific offending for other crimes, like theft and shoplifting, that can all too often put offenders on the path to a prison sentence.

Reforming the criminal justice system does not begin and end with reforming the prison estate and our probation services, though that is the critical place to start.

We also need to intervene earlier by giving our courts the right tools for reform. There can never be an excuse for committing crime but too often people end up in prison because our interventions to tackle problems like drug addiction or mental health issues don't work as well as they should.

The number of first time offenders in the system has fallen by 57 per cent since 2006, whereas our reoffending rates have stayed flat.

That means police, prison officers and probation staff see the same faces over and over again.

And it means communities end up being blighted by the same people. Any MP will tell you that one of the most frequent complaints in surgery is from law abiding residents who can't understand why such a small number of people can be allowed to wreak so much havoc in their neighbourhood.

So, just as we are giving prison and probation staff more power to reform offenders, our courts should also be able to play a frontline role in reforming criminals and getting them to quit crime for good.

Ministry of Justice research shows that community sentences are most effective when they tackle the problems that contribute to the offender's crime. Mental Health Treatment Requirements are some of our most effective measures that can really help get someone's life back on track.

But if I tell you in 2015 mental health treatment requirements accounted for fewer than 1% of all treatment commenced as part of a community sentence you will see where the problem lies.

We need a more systematic, nationally consistent approach that provides quicker and more certain access to mental health treatment for offenders who need it. That will stop them getting into a position which leads to a custodial sentence.

I am working closely with the Health Secretary who is extremely committed to this and NHS England to develop a new mental health protocol. This will ensure timely access to mental health services where the courts impose a mental health treatment requirement as part of a sentence.

I am also working with the Judiciary and the Health Secretary to make sure courts have better access to psychologists to diagnose and oversee treatment of offenders.

We have already got great work taking place in Newcastle where a dedicated mental health team produces reports for sentencers. This means that cases conclude more swiftly as fewer are adjourned because a costly expert report needs to be prepared and sentencers get better information.

And in Milton Keynes a bespoke service has dramatically increased the number of sentences involving mental health treatment. I want to see that approach adopted throughout the country.

We also need to do more to tackle the scourge of drink and drugs. 62% of prisoners who reported using drugs in the four weeks before custody reoffended in the year after release. But in 2015 drug treatment orders accounted for only 5% of treatments attached to community sentences.

In its pioneering report, *Ambitious for Recovery*, the CSJ called for greater use of drug courts with rigid compliance. Evidence from Australia suggests those who adhere to their drug treatment order are 37 per cent less likely to offend.

Early intervention by our courts is vitally important in stopping women offenders from ending up in prison. We will be announcing our strategy for women later this year and have already announced a new director for women in custody and the community – Sonia Crozier. I believe it is the first time ever that the agency responsible for prisons and probation have a single person responsible for women across community and custody.

Family drugs and alcohol courts, like the one I visited in Maidstone, will play a vital role in this. I believe that judges are as important in reforming people as any prison or probation officer.

Working with local authorities, judges closely oversee compliance with treatment programmes. I've watched it in action – I know that it works. Over 26 weeks, those taking part have to comply with drug testing and therapy sessions to stay clean.

This sort of consistent supervision and support, overseen by one judge over a long time period, is helping women beat the addictions that can fuel crime, and making it more likely that they will be able to regain custody of their children.

Let me provide one example among many. One woman, I'll give her the name Jenny, has transformed from a drug dependent 25-year-old with a five-year-old daughter to a woman determined to do right by her child.

Without this intervention Jenny would have continued to steal to feed her habit. Jenny now has a chance at a better life. Her daughter does too.

There are people who would dismiss this as soft justice. I would call it decency and common sense because without this court ordered intervention, Jenny's path was almost certainly leading to prison.

How many more victims of crime would there be before that happened? How many more working people would have returned home to find their back window smashed and their treasured possessions gone?

And what about the children of offenders?

All the evidence shows that children whose parents end up in prison are much more likely to end up there too. Two thirds of boys separated from imprisoned parents go on to offend themselves.

Chances are that they would grow up to rob and steal to feed a habit. Generation upon generation of blighted lives and blighted communities.

Early intervention is not a 'nice to have' added extra to the justice system, it is vital if we are ever to break the cycle of crime, punishment and more crime.

I want now to address the final point – that we need to better at managing the prison population we have. We are making progress but there is more we can do.

Everyone, including David Blunkett who introduced them, regrets the effects of indeterminate sentences of imprisonment for public protection. It is to the credit of Ken Clarke that he abolished them.

We need to be realistic that these prisoners on these sentences have committed serious crimes and that some are dangerous people. But there are others that have long served their minimum term and are committed to proving that they are safe for release.

Of course, public protection must be the number one priority. But it seems unjust that someone sentenced in 2010 can remain in prison for years when – if sentenced today – they might have an automatic release date.

That's why it's important we tackle the backlog of these cases that are waiting for a Parole Board hearing. We are making progress. There are currently 3,683 of these prisoners in our jails. And last year we released a

record 553.

But I know there is more to do. That is why I have set up a dedicated unit within the Ministry of Justice to ensure these cases are dealt with as efficiently as possible, while ensuring that people are only released when it is safe to do so.

I also want to ensure the system of recall works better, and that we remain focused on making sure that more foreign criminals are sent home every year.

In 2016 a record 5,810 foreign offenders were sent back to their countries and I want to build on that. We all agree it is desirable to have a lower prison population but it has to be for the right reasons.

Public protection is paramount which means managing the prison population in a safe and sustainable way.

I want to see the prison population go down because Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service has got better at reforming offenders. I want to see it go down because we have got better at intervening earlier. I want to see it go down because we have got better at managing the population inside our jails.

Reductions by cap or quota, or by sweeping sentencing cuts are not a magic bullet, they are a dangerous attempt at a quick fix.

We need to do the hard work of improving community sentences, dealing with problems like drink and drugs and making our prisons work better.

This will not be fixed in weeks or months – but if we are resolute – we will see our society become safer and our prison population will reduce.