



The Dames Commander Society: Formal Launch

Dearest DCS Members,

It's official – as of Wednesday 25th September 2024, the Dames Commander Society has formally launched. After 18 months of gradually growing our membership and testing some ideas, we have completed our strategic review to define **our purpose and strategic plan** for the next phase of our development. Thank you to everyone who participated in this process which was facilitated by the *Growth Leadership* consultancy.

In this update, we share the headlines of this work and what it means for how we plan to take things forwards.

We also say **Bon Voyage** to Dame Helen Stokes-Lampard who is emigrating to New Zealand, and so passes on the baton as Chair of DCS to Dame Tristia Harrison, along with the Vice Chairs Dames Jackie Daniel and Sue Hill.

This handover formally took place at our wonderful event at the House of Lords, hosted by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, where over 100 Dames networked away.

The DCS now has over **240 members** with a significant increase in the last few months thanks to the involvement of the Cabinet Office. We're delighted that we are now officially part of new Dame onboarding and would like to acknowledge the efforts of Dames Asha

Khemka and Jane Dacre for their help with this. Please do also please keep recommending the DCS to any Dames in your network.

Now constituted as a Community Interest Company (CIC) and following external guidance about how to make the transition from informal network to a Society, the DCS has established an **Interim Board**. Its role is to steward the Society for the long-term acting as caretakers for current – and future – Dames. Drawn from those who volunteered in response to our email invitation to you all, this caretaker Board has representatives balancing the skills matrix required and the various fields recognised by Damehood. It met for the second time last week to broaden decision making and engagement of members, orchestrating our work under the three strategic pillars which we have defined:

1. **Organising our Society** – Good governance and financial foundations to set us up safely and for the long term. This is critical to enabling all of our work together.
2. **Connecting with each other** – Creating a thriving, inclusive, membership that is able to easily and effectively connect and add value to each other's work. There is a wealth of expertise, energy, and influence across our membership and connecting with each other will unlock real magic.
3. **Creating societal impact** – Championing continued service and excellence by Dames with humility, including seeing how we best amplify and add value to the work of other organisations. This is our ultimate goal, reflecting the obligation we all feel to 'pay forward' and live up to our honour.

The Board is establishing **sub-committees** to work on each of these agendas. If you are interested in being actively involved or have ideas for ways to achieve things, please do let us know. Do also bear in mind that we rely on voluntary, pro bono and donated time.

One further development to highlight is that we now have a **website** (www.damescommandersociety.org). This will become our new 'virtual home' as THE place where we all share information and

connect with one another – replacing the informality of WhatsApp with something more substantial and navigable. The site has a private **Members' Area** which will, in future, include our very own **Directory of Dames**, where we can each share our details and interests with other members and where connections and conversations can be made. More details about how you access and enter your information will follow and we will have our Directory in place before the new year. In the meantime, do take a look. The password is DamesCS2024.

We are pleased to have made so much progress over the last few months and look forward to what this new phase of the DCS will bring.

A message from our outgoing Chair

Dame Helen Stokes-Lampard heads to New Zealand – handing over as Chair to Dame Tristia Harrison.



Having Chaired this phase of the DCS's development, Helen is delighted to be becoming the National Chief Medical Officer at Health New Zealand in October. She will remain involved with the DCS as a member – and will no doubt help us develop our outreach to Commonwealth Dames.

We would like to thank Helen for her amazing commitment, care and connectivity which has been so important to us in this foundational phase.

It has been a remarkable privilege to help create this most unique Society. I am so proud of what we have achieved between us. Our formal launch at the House of Lords on 25th September marked our coming of age as a society – and particular thanks to The Baroness Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson who was our gracious and inspiring

host, and to Professor Dame Carol Black who spoke so eloquently about the importance of service and 'giving back'.

I'm sad to be stepping away as your inaugural chair but so delighted to be handing over to the wonderful Dame Tristia Harrison who I have got to know well as we've worked on our transition. I know that together with Dames Sue Hill and Jackie Daniel who have been our inaugural Vice Chairs, the Interim Board and the increased involvement of our wider membership, the DCS is set to thrive and be a real force for good.

I have gained so much from the energy, insights, wisdom and enthusiasm of our members – and look forward to being part of the DCS journey as we continue to grow and connect. And I would love to offer any Dames who come to New Zealand to pay me a visit.

Warmest wishes to you all,

Helen

A message from our new Chair, on behalf of the interim Board

Dame Tristia Harrison and the Interim Board plan our next steps



Tristia has volunteered to Chair the DCS for the next phase of its development, working with the Vice-Chairs and Interim Board. She and Helen have been working in the background to ensure a smooth transition.

The Board was appointed from those who volunteered and applied as part of the Strategy Review process facilitated by Growth Leadership. They will serve on an interim basis acting as caretakers while we develop towards more formal governance.

It was wonderful to see over 100 Dames at the House of Lords last week. Thank you so much to Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson DBE for

hosting us, and to Professor Dame Carol Black GBE for the most inspiring speech.

I would like to recognise and thank Helen for everything she has done – together with Sue and Jackie as Vice Chairs and all the other founder Dames – to turn the idea of the DCS into a reality. We will miss her enormously but know that she will stay connected and championing Dames everywhere.

I couldn't be more delighted and privileged to support the development of the DCS. As we all know, being awarded a Damehood is the most extraordinary honour in every way. It is surprising, humbling and inspires a deep desire to support, convene and continue to give back to society. For me, this starts with learning from all the other, brilliant Dames and their endeavours. This connection and resource is something which the DCS uniquely creates.

Excitingly DCS members are growing quickly – we are at 242 at last count. Thank you to everyone who has helped get us this far.

Looking forward, I very much see my role and that of the Interim Board as caretakers for the Society to establish us as an asset to hand onto the next generation of brilliant Dames.



The Interim Board will meet six times a year (3 in person, 3 virtually) and run a small number of sub committees focused on our three clear objectives:

- 1. Organise our Society*
- 2. Connect Dames with each other, and*
- 3. Create societal impact*

Across the Society, DCS members bring brilliance from a fantastic spread of sectors. To allow us all to tap into that we will have a programme of events, a quarterly newsletter, our Directory, and

excitingly, a podcast series. Importantly, we will start to explore the ways in which our experience, expertise and networks can be harnessed for good.

We welcome all input and support as we start to get into the real substance of our collective convening power. We are just in our very early stages, and this will evolve over the coming weeks, months and years. The Imperial Society of Knights Bachelor was established over 120 years ago and have already been a good source of insight. We plan to work with them and with the Cabinet Office to ensure we build quietly and thoughtfully from here to establish the Society for the very long term.

We know that this will be a marathon not a sprint and that we must bring excellence and service to the way we establish ourselves over the coming months and years.

We will provide regular updates and use our new website area to ensure we can all engage and connect effectively. Please do message me, Jackie and Sue separately with any thoughts / questions and all ideas.

Tristia

Connecting with each other

The DCS was hosted in Parliament by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson

We marked our progress with a formal celebration at the House of Lords attended by around 100 Dames.

We heard wonderful and inspiring opening remarks from our host Baroness Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson and from **Grand Dame Professor Carol Black**. The room was a-buzz with people making connections and sharing all kinds of news, views, and ideas. It was superb to see the power of our network in action.



For those who were not able to join us on this occasion, we look forward to seeing you at a future event. Additionally, if you have ideas for events, we'd love to hear them.

Developing our brand


As a relatively new society with a wide-ranging membership, the DCS is taking a phased approach to developing our brand and our external profile. Having developed our brand ID and website we are now planning to pilot a series of **podcasts**, hosted by Professor Dame Jane Dacre. You may have seen Jane's fantastic "*Medical Women Talking*" series which explores what it takes to rise to the top as a woman in medicine. We are delighted Dames will have a similar

opportunity to share what we have learned to encourage and recognise service and excellence.

We will also be establishing a **LinkedIn** presence, although at this stage, while we focus on fully establishing, connecting, and developing our work, we are not planning wider public profile or social media engagement.

We are very much adopting the principle of ‘**Connection... for Action ... before Words**’.

We have developed some guidance about our approach for your use, please find this document attached.



GUIDANCE FOR MEMBERS



As a relatively new society with a wide-ranging membership, the DCS is taking a phased approach to our external communications. We are a society for the very long term and have been creating a credible and transparent, but low-key, public presence in the form of our website and LinkedIn page. We are not planning wider media or social media engagement at this stage and ask members to also bear this in mind. This document contains some Q&As and our core narrative and strategy for your information and use in your day-to-day. The Board and our Membership, Events & Marketing sub-committee are directing this work. If you would like more information or to be more involved, please contact central@damescommandersociety.org.

At this point in time, we are focused on:

- Communication with and between the membership,
- Relationship-building with potential sponsors and key stakeholders such as the Cabinet Office,
- Identifying those who we might partner with on our emerging societal impact agenda.

Once this is underway and results are being achieved, wider public profile-building and media engagement in service of the causes/initiatives will be considered. However, for now, our aim is to remain low key and to ensure we prioritise “action before words” creating a Society for the very long term.

Specific guidance for all Members:

- Our **website** (www.damescommandersociety.org) contains our core narrative and key information. The Members’ Area is only visible to us. Functionality and the content available on this page will continue to develop as the society matures.
- We are establishing a **LinkedIn** page which you can link to if you have a LinkedIn profile. You are welcome to include the DCS in your LinkedIn profile if you wish using the wording in our core narrative. We suggest members do not make any LinkedIn posts or reference the DCS on any other forms of social media at this point. We will let you know when we are ready to move to this phase (ie once we are more fully formed and have activities to promote beyond our membership community).
- Any **media inquiries** will be managed centrally by the Board. Please refer any inquiries to central@damescommandersociety.org.
- **Campaigning activities and public statements** should not be undertaken in the name of the Society without explicit prior agreement by the Board.
- You are invited to help us identify **potential sponsors and event ideas** for the DCS. Please share your ideas with the Membership, Events and Marketing committee who will ensure these are coordinated accordingly to central@damescommandersociety.org.
- Potential **causes and partners** for the DCS to support can be shared with our Societal Impact and Output committee who are developing our approach to this important topic. More information will be shared in the coming months.
- You are very welcome to **connect with other members** independently about any common interests that you wish to pursue outside of the Society. Please use the Members’ Area of the website for this. As a non-political membership organisation, we again reinforce that campaigning activities and public statements should not be undertaken in the name of the Society without explicit prior agreement by the Board.
- Alongside other ways of championing service & excellence by Dames and others, we are considering a series of **digital talks/podcasts**. More information will follow but please let the Membership, Events and Marketing committee know if you have ideas or are interested in speaking at to central@damescommandersociety.org.

Organising our Society

DCS Sub-Committees

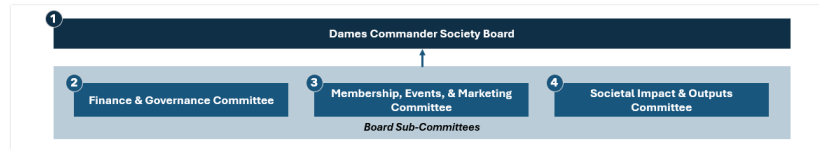
We would love your engagement with our three sub-committees on:

- Finance & Governance
- Membership, Events & Marketing
- Societal Impact & Outputs

If you would be interested in working on one of them, or have ideas for them, please do [get in touch](#).



DCS Board Sub-Committees



Purpose of each body:

- 1 The Board will oversee activity across the DCS, setting the overall strategic direction, mission, and vision. The Board safeguards the DCS's work and reputation by ensuring that the organisation has effective financial and management capability, that the intended benefits and impact of DCS-led work is appropriately realised, and that DCS activity maintains a positive external reputation.
The Board will be supported by a variety of sub-committees, that are delegated to manage the day-to-day activity within their area of focus. These committees will include:
- 2 The Finance & Governance Committee is sets the DCS up for success as the treasury function as well as the sub-committee which develops the DCS governance structure.
- 3 The Membership, Events, & Marketing Committee ensures that there is a clear value proposition for membership which is marketed well. As the value proposition includes the events that the DCS puts on, this Sub-Committee will be responsible for organising a range of DCS events and activities, to ensure members gain sufficient benefit.
- 4 The Societal Impact & Outputs Committee is concerned with the DCS's impact of wider society, selecting causes to for the DCS to champion and organising working groups to action those causes.

We will place updates about the Board and Committee meetings in the Members Area of our website. The next Board meeting will take place on 27th November 2024.

New administrative arrangements

Our new DCS email – central@damescommandersociety.org – is now in operation as we fully establish ourselves as an independent entity.



We are also delighted to introduce **Sophie Simpson** who joins us as our part time organiser, kindly donated pro-bono by her employer Modality. Sophie will be managing our membership, website, Board and events.

As you know, Deloitte have generously provided pro bono administrative support since our inception. Huge thanks in particular to **Talia Nechelput** and **Chloe Inglis** who have been our rocks for the past year.

We also wish to recognise **Claire Moran** from Dame Sue Hill's office who has been a super star in helping to set up as a CIC and our financial administration, in addition to organising all the DCS events so far.

This type of support is invaluable to any membership organisation, and we feel very lucky to have benefited from their efforts.

Acknowledgments

The work to establish the DCS has benefited from external support from a number of partners and sponsors.

We would like to recognise and extend our thanks for the pro-bono support of partners:

- **Deloitte** have provided considerable consultancy and significant logistics support since the very start. Sara Siegel, Global Head of Health and Lifesciences, has been with us since day one, and is joining the Board as an Adviser.
- **Growth Leadership** facilitated our strategy review and brand development process. They gathered the views of over forty Dames and brought external insights into two workshops which informed our strategy and evolution as an organisation. Alex Cole and Maeve Thompson will continue to support us as Advisers.
- **Modality** CEO Vincent Sai for providing Sophie Simpson as our administrative help and support for the year ahead.
- **Kaizen** for Jeremy McDonald's work building our website.
- **Sian Jarvis**, communications, and marketing expert, for providing timely independent guidance.

We have also received help and sponsorship in hosting events:

- **Salesforce** funded the House of Lords event as well as our winter dinner last year.
- **Illumina** funded previous social events.
- **Sir Mark Caulfield** helped host our first social event at Barts Great Hall.
- **Dame Sue Langley** generously hosted our event at the Old Bailey.

Our new Membership, Events and Marketing committee would love to hear of other ideas and contacts you might have.

We would also like to thank:

- **The Cabinet Office** for enabling us to partner with them. Through them we have been able to complete reach out to everyone who has received a Damehood. We are delighted to now be part of their on-boarding process with the DCS able to welcome and connect Dames to our community of service and excellence.
- **The Imperial Society of Knights Bachelor** have provided valuable insights from their long tradition as a society for those receiving Knighthoods. We can see there will be opportunities for our two organisations to work closely together over the months and years ahead.

Last, but by no means least, many thanks to you all for being part of the DCS. We appreciate your membership, ideas and involvement and look forward to how this next phase of the DCS will bring us together in new and exciting ways.

Please do share your feedback, opportunities, and questions.

With warmest regards,

Helen Stokes-Lampard (outgoing Chair), **Tristia Harrison** (incoming Chair), **Sue Hill, & Jackie Daniel** (vice-chairs) **and the Board**

On behalf of the Dames Commander Society

P.S. The Damehood Stars

For those looking for a convenient and light way to show their Damehood at events, we previously shared information about miniatures which some members privately commissioned:

- Miniature Damehood Star – a solid silver miniature obtained from Adele Moore at www.ghmore.co.uk.
- Worcester Medal – miniature ribbon and Mounting Ladies Bow With Tails available via Worcester Medals.

The DCS has no formal relationship with either retailer – this is a Member to Member reference.

[Get in touch](#)

This is an internal document which provides an update to the members of the Dames Commander Society. It is not to be copied or made available external parties. This email may be shared with Dames who are not yet members of the Dames Commander Society, by way of recruitment.

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