



DAMES
COMMANDER
SOCIETY

Dames Commander Society | 15th January 2025

The Dames Commander Society: Happy New Year and January 2025 Update

Dear DCS Members,

Firstly a belated Happy New Year. I do hope everyone had some rest over the holiday period.

This is a short note to both welcome our new Dames and members to the society and to update / remind on the progress and plan for the DCS into 2025.

Welcome to our new Dames

We are delighted to welcome the new Dames awarded in the NY 2025 honours list. Also delighted that we have been able to speak to most and explain the DCS. Looking forward to meeting as many of you as soon as possible.

DCS Annual Membership fees

A brief reminder that the membership fee of £50 (or more if you are able) is now due. Thanks to everyone who has made the transfer. We are still in the process of setting up an online payment platform, which is taking longer than anticipated. Please use the bank transfer / standing order payment method for this year – a reminder of these details is below.

Account Number **75382599**

Account Name ***The Dames Commander Society CIC***

Sort Code **40-35-18**

This is a small annual amount designed to keep the Society stable whilst we plan into the next few months. We will keep everyone updated on this. Please do contact me if you are not able to make this transfer.

Interim Board Meeting and Governance

We have our second in person Board meeting next week and will be discussing our usual three topics:

1. Finance and governance
2. Membership, events and marketing
3. Societal impact and outputs

We will be reviewing in detail a simple governance structure as well as updating on membership numbers and fees. We are also delighted that our programme of Podcasts is kicking off in January.

We will also share with everyone the very early work on our third (and very important) topic which is our collective societal impact. As discussed previously we have some emerging thinking here and keen to share more widely in due course. Below also is a briefing from Dame Barbara Stocking who has started some work around the challenges facing women in Afghanistan. Please do contact me or Barbara directly if you have thoughts and advice on this.

London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) Concert and New Members Event – 19th March 17:30 to 19:30

Our first event of 2025 will take place on Wednesday 19th March - at the Barbican in London. Generously hosted by Dame Kathryn McDowell, MD of the LSO it will provide us with a fantastic opportunity to network and meet each other, as well as attend one of the LSO's 'Half Six Fix' concerts. This is a special hour long performance of Bartok which will include an introduction from the

amazing Barbara Hannigan, a supremely talented singer and conductor. We will meet ahead of the concert at 530pm for an hour and will also welcome as many new DCS members and Dames as possible. Please rsvp to central@damescommandersociety.org to confirm your place.

Societal Impact & Outputs:

Short Briefing on Women in Afghanistan

Dame Barbara Stocking

Confidential

In the summer of 2024, a number of Dames put their concerns about the suffering of Afghan women on to our WhatsApp site. There was interest in trying to do something and a small group of Dames, led by Dame Nicola Brewer, Dame Anne Marie Rafferty and Dame Barbara Stocking, came together. Early on we recognised that we needed to know more, especially from Afghan women themselves. This was made possible through the contacts of Baroness Fiona Hodgson, who has been running the Afghan Women Support Group for the last twelve years.

Our group of Dames managed to meet a number of people, in person or online, including at the FCDO, the Aga Khan Foundation, Turquoise Mountain, and a number of Afghan women in the UK or elsewhere. The key issues that have arisen are education, the banning of secondary school education for girls, and healthcare. These are inter-related dramatically, as all training for midwives, nurses and female doctors has been banned. The already high mortality rate of women in pregnancy or childbirth is likely to increase.

We have had encouragement that Dames can have useful influence, at minimum, keeping Afghanistan and its women on the agenda. This has to be done carefully as there are different views on the situation. A number of bodies who have been working in Afghanistan

for a long time are, surprisingly, able to continue. They are clear they cannot challenge the Taliban or their work would be jeopardised. Another group of women, particularly in the diaspora, believe there should be pressure put on the Taliban and are campaigning for the International Criminal Court (ICC) to have the mandate to cover “gender apartheid”.

For the moment we feel we should put our efforts into advocacy, particularly with our own Government, and related influencers. What we think is appropriate may change as we understand more and as the situation evolves. Our group is informal but if you would like to join us, please do contact Dame Barbara Stocking on WhatsApp.

BMS

13 January 2025

Thank you all. Wishing everyone the very best for 2025. And as ever please do contact me, Jackie Daniel or Sue Hill with any questions or thoughts.

Dame Tristia Harrison

On behalf of the Dames Commander Society

[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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