



INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT



PRESS NOTICE - 20 January 2026

The Rt Hon. the Lord Beamish PC, Chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (ISC), has provided the following press notice on behalf of the Committee:

“Since July 2025, the ISC has been investigating the security implications of the proposal for a new Chinese Embassy in London, to ensure that these issues have been given due consideration by Government in the planning process.

The Committee initially took oral evidence from senior officials at the Home Office and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). We then reviewed written evidence provided by the UK Intelligence Community, and commissioned and received further evidence where we still had questions. It has proved more difficult than it should have been to get straightforward answers to our basic questions.

Overall, we recognise that there were a number of factors at play, and that either way the decision would give rise to concerns for some. However, our concern was solely from a national security perspective. Turning to the evidence that we have finally received, on balance we are content that the UK Intelligence Community had sufficient opportunity to feed in any security concerns and that Ministers had the necessary information on which to base their decision.

Nevertheless, the process within Government was not effectively coordinated, nor was it as robust as we would have expected for a matter of such consequence. We were surprised both at the lack of clarity as to the role that national security considerations play in planning decisions, and that advice was prepared without some of the key facts at hand. Key reports lacked the detail necessary, were dealt with piecemeal, and appeared not to have been kept up to date. We will be writing to the Prime Minister with our concerns.

On the basis of the evidence we have received, and having carefully reviewed the nuanced national security considerations, the Committee has concluded that, taken as a whole, the national security concerns that arise can be satisfactorily mitigated.

It is appropriate that China has a diplomatic presence and Embassy in the UK, as the UK does in China. However, there is a wider context which must be borne in mind: we know that the UK is of significant interest to China when it comes to espionage and interference,

and that its state intelligence apparatus targets the UK and its interests prolifically and aggressively.

The Committee's 2023 'China' Report provides a comprehensive overview of the intelligence threat posed by the Chinese state and HMG's response. That Report detailed the Committee's concerns that Government had been failing to think long term in its response: something China had historically been able to take advantage of. We are not yet convinced that the government has managed to reconcile internally that China can be both an economic partner and a national security threat: these are not mutually exclusive, even if both require a dexterity not yet evident."

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament (ISC) is a statutory committee of Parliament. It is not a Select Committee and has quite different powers and responsibilities.
2. The Committee has responsibility for oversight of the intelligence and security activities of the UK Government. Established by the Intelligence Services Act 1994, it was reformed, and its powers significantly reinforced, by the Justice and Security Act 2013.
3. The Committee oversees the policies, expenditure, administration and operations of the UK Intelligence Community. This includes the intelligence Agencies - MI5, SIS (the Secret Intelligence Service or MI6) and the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) - as well as: the Joint Intelligence Organisation and the National Security Secretariat in the Cabinet Office; Defence Intelligence in the Ministry of Defence; Homeland Security Group in the Home Office; and the National Cyber Force.
4. The Committee can require information to be provided to it. (The limited exception is in relation to information on ongoing intelligence and security operations - the Committee can still examine such material, however it is provided voluntarily rather than it being mandatory.)
5. The Committee consists of nine Members drawn from both Houses of Parliament, and appointed by Parliament, with the Chair being elected by its Members. The Committee was reconstituted in December 2024, following the July 2024 General Election, and its Members are:

The Rt Hon. the Lord Beamish PC (Chairman)
The Rt Hon. Sir Jeremy Wright KC MP (Deputy Chairman)
Baroness Brown of Cambridge DBE FREng FRS
Peter Dowd MP
Richard Foord MP
The Rt Hon. Sir John Hayes CBE MP
Jessica Morden MP
Derek Twigg MP
Admiral The Rt Hon. Lord West of Spithead GCB DSC PC.

6. The Members of the Committee are subject to Section 1(l)(b) of the Official Secrets Act 1989 and are routinely given access to highly classified material in carrying out their duties.
7. The Committee sets its own agenda and work programme. It takes evidence from Government Ministers, the Heads of the intelligence and security Agencies, officials from across the UK Intelligence Community, and other witnesses as required. The Committee makes an Annual Report on the discharge of its functions and also produces Reports on specific issues.
8. The Committee's dedicated Press Officer can be reached at:
Alexander.Hunt1@CabinetOffice.gov.uk or 07873702652
9. The Committee's 2023 'China' Report can be read here:
<https://isc.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ISC-China.pdf>