

## **The next disaster**

SIR – Whitehall is repeatedly caught out by avoidable disasters. Last year we urged the appointment of a senior cabinet minister for national security and strategy (Letters, August 10) – someone responsible for long-term national interests. We also recommended that a former cabinet heavyweight be appointed as an independent “go anywhere, ask any question” stress-tester.

These ideas might have prevented some recent disasters, such as the riots, which we precisely warned of beforehand, and the border agency debacle. One looming disaster for open global markets: who is looking after our resilience if protectionism takes root? We are the single most vulnerable nation in this eventuality.

Better government must be matched with more active citizenship and non-state provision. The cohesion of our society is the centre of gravity for our security, prosperity and long-term well-being. More members of our society feel in despair, disengaged, disfranchised, and are potentially disloyal than for a very long time. We must turn this round urgently. This is not just about government.

Citizens can do vast amounts more by giving just a few hours of voluntary service each month. We should encourage active engagement from all sections of society.

### **Brigadier Nigel Hall**

Major General Tim Cross

### **Brett Lovegrove**

Former head of counter-terrorism, City of London Police

### **Cat Tully**

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