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New UKIP Leader Says Putin Is Her 'Political Hero'

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The new leader of Britain's UK Independence Party (UKIP) has declared that Russian President Vladimir Putin is among her "political heroes."

Speaking on the BBC's Sunday politics, Diane James placed Putin alongside former British Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and Winston Churchill.

James, who was chosen to replace former UKIP leader Nigel Farage last week, had previously praised Putin in a 2015 interview with London's LBC radio.

"I admire him [Putin] from the point of view that he's standing up for his country. He is very nationalist," James said. "He is a very strong leader. He is putting Russia first."

Nationalist party UKIP played a leading role in Britain's recent referendum on European Union membership.

The group's former leader, Nigel Farage, has also spoken of his more-muted admiration for Putin, telling reporters in March that, "As an operator, but not as a human being, I would say [I admire] Putin.

"The way he played the whole Syria thing. Brilliant," he said. "Not that I approve of him politically. How many journalists in jail now?"

Farage was recently offered his
show by the Kremlin-sponsored RT television channel,
Britain's Telegraph newspaper reported. Farage later announced that he had declined the offer.

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