



Government *WORLD*™

Winter 2017 Edition

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P.O. Box 159 Carlisle, Great Britain CA2 5BG

Office: 08702 416 422

Fax: 01228 674 959

E-mail: office@government-world.com

Submissions should be sent to **Government WORLD**,
PO Box 159, Carlisle, CA2 5BG
Tel: 08702 416 422 Fax: 01228 674 959
Email: submissions@government-world.com

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Cover picture: Sunlight through ancient woodland



By Paul G Bazeley for
Government World

Paul's News Roundup

*Summary of the main news
and sports events over the last
three months*

October News Review

A gunman opened fire on a large crowd gathered for the Route 91 Harvest music festival in Las Vegas. Over fifty died and over 500 were injured as Stephen Paddock, 64 from Nevada, fired over a thousand rounds from his 32nd-floor room in the Mandalay Bay hotel. Paddock was found dead in his hotel room, his motive is unknown. The incident was the deadliest mass shooting by an individual in US history and once again called the

country's gun laws into question.

OJ Simpson was released on parole after spending nine years in jail for armed robbery and assault in a Las Vegas hotel in 2007. The former American footballer, now 70 years old, will face five years of supervision.

The Spanish region of Catalan held an independence referendum. While only 42% turned out, the result was an overwhelming 90% voting for 'Yes' independence. The vote was declared unlawful

by the Spanish Government and was marred when police clashed with voters. Later in the month the Catalan leader, Carles Puigdemont, did not declare independence as some expected but instead called for international mediation.

Legendary rock musician Tom Petty died of a cardiac arrest aged 66. The singer-songwriter was found unconscious in his Malibu home and later died surrounded by friends and family. Petty was best known for his music with the band Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers and his work with the Travelling Wilburys.

More than a dozen women came forward to accuse Harvey Weinstein of sexually harassing, assaulting or raping them. After the original claims, many other women spoke out regarding similar

experiences. After the allegation, Weinstein was suspended by BAFTA, fired from his production company and his wife Georgina Chapman left him. Weinstein denies the accusations.

October Sports Review

Iceland defeated Kosovo 2-0 to top their qualification group and become the smallest nation by population to qualify for the FIFA World Cup. Iceland has a population of approximately 330,000 and has previously knocked England out of the European Cup in 2016.

As one enters another departs, as the US failed to qualify for the World Cup for the first time since 1986. The team lost 2-1 to Trinidad and Tobago when all they needed was a draw to qualify. This now means Panama will go to the World Cup Finals for the first time.

Lewis Hamilton became the fifth driver to win four Formula One World Championship titles. The driver is now the most successful British driver having moved one title clear of Sir Jackie Stewart and is only behind

Juan Manuel Fangio, with 5 titles, and Michael Schumacher who is the all-time record holder with seven championship titles.

November News Review

A coup d'état in Zimbabwe led to Robert Mugabe's resignation as President after being in power for over 35 years. It is thought that the coup took place after many were unhappy Mugabe sacked vice president Emmerson Mnangagwa, which led to people thinking his wife Grace may be his successor. The Zimbabwe Army then placed Mugabe under house arrest. Mugabe negotiated a deal to ensure he was exempt from prosecution.

Following the Weinstein accusations, many others came forward to report inappropriate sexual

behaviour in the film industry. Most notably, Netflix announces it will no longer work with Kevin Spacey after allegations came out against him.

North Korea launched a further missile test. It was reported to be its highest ballistic missile yet and is believed to be capable of threatening anywhere in the world. The missile landed in Japanese waters after reaching an altitude of 2,800 miles according to South Korea.

Aalvator Mundi, a painting believed to be by Leonardo da Vinci is sold at Christie's in New York for \$450million. The painting now holds the record for the most expensive piece of art sold at auction. The painting was commissioned by King Louis XII and depicts Jesus Christ.

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle announced their

engagement. The couple have had an 18-month romance after meeting through a mutual friend.

Charles Manson, the leader of the 'family' cult died of natural causes at the age of 83.

November Sports Review

Italy failed to qualify for the FIFA World Cup after losing to Sweden in a play-off match. It is the first time since 1958 the four-time winners have not appeared in the finals. The legendary goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon announced his retirement after the match.

December News Review

An attempted terrorist attack took place in Manhattan, New York. A man identified as Akayed Ullah tried to detonate a

pipe bomb in the subway. The bomb only partially detonated leaving some close by with non-life threatening injuries. The suspect was taken to hospital with burns. Ullah had pledged allegiance with ISIS before the attack.

Donald Trump announced that the US will now recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The decision was widely condemned across the world. The President also revealed plans to move the US embassy there. The controversial announcement raised tensions in the region and many claimed it would jeopardise the Middle East peace process.

Apple admitted it deliberately slows down iPhones as they get older without telling their customers. The announcement confirmed a long-held theory held by many. However, Apple released a statement claiming it is a precautionary measure to prevent the phones breaking or shutting down unexpectedly.

Russia was banned from the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea after allegations of state-sponsored doping were

investigated. 'Clean' Russian athletes will compete under the name 'Olympic Athletes from Russia'.

The Home Office announced that the Blue British passports could return as early 2019. The passports are redesigned every five years and the next redesign is due in 2019 when the UK is set to leave the European Union. Many welcomed the return to blue as it shows an indication Britain is back, while others stated there were more pressing issues to be worried about than the colour of passports.

December Sports Review

Manchester City beat Manchester United 2-1 at Old Trafford to set a new record for the most wins in a row in the English top-flight. The win for City also

meant they go 11 points clear of United in second place in the league.

It was revealed Chris Froome failed a drug test at the Vuelta a Espana earlier in the year. Froome stated that he had 'fundamentally followed the protocol'. Froome hopes that data Team Sky kept of him during the time will exonerate any questions about his credibility. The cyclist was found to have excessive levels of an asthma drug, however, Team Sky is confident he stayed within his allowed dose and Froome claims he followed his doctors advice.

END

BCC comments on inflation figures for September 2017

Commenting on the Consumer Price Index for September 2017, published by the ONS, Suren Thiru, Head of Economics at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

"Inflation rose for the second successive month, confirming that price growth remains on an upward trajectory. The rise in September mostly reflects increasing prices for food and recreational goods, along with transport costs, which fell by less than they did a year ago.

"Higher inflation remains a concern for business as it increases the pressure on firms cost base and weakens investment intentions.

"The MPC is facing a tricky trade-off between rising inflation and a weakening economy. However, it

remains likely that the current spike in inflation is temporary with little evidence that rising consumer prices is driving materially stronger pay growth. The BCC's latest Quarterly Economic Survey confirms that the percentage of firms citing pay settlements as the key driver behind price pressures remains well below the historic average. We expect that inflation is likely to peak shortly, before easing back in 2018 as the impact of the post-EU referendum slide in sterling drops out of the calculation.

"The MPC should resist the temptation to raise interest rates, particularly during this period of heightened political uncertainty. Raising rates before the UK economy is ready risks undermining consumer and business confidence, weakening the UK growth prospects further. Next month's Autumn Budget must also be used to boost confidence and growth, including addressing the escalating burden of up-front taxes and costs associated with doing business in the UK."

Science and tech at core of defence as Minister launches new strategy in Birmingham

By setting out specific research areas and capability priorities, like autonomy, cyber and sensor technology, the strategy will encourage defence to be even more responsive to emerging opportunities and threats, whilst promoting more innovation and collaboration with suppliers.

The Defence Minister made the announcement while visiting Small and Medium-Sized businesses (SMEs) in Birmingham, one of the UK's up-and-coming tech hubs, at EEF's brand new facility in the West Midlands.

Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin said:

“This new strategy puts world-beating science and technology right at the core of our Armed

Forces. Investing millions into innovative ideas from dynamic British companies will help us defend the country in the face of intensifying threats and keep us ahead of the curve.”

A world-leading centre for life sciences, Birmingham has over 36,800 digital jobs, with over 550 startups created from 2011 to 2015, making it a fertile ground for new ideas for UK Defence and Security.

Last year saw the department's direct spend with smaller business increase by over 10%. Many have benefitted from the MOD's £800 million Innovation Fund, with the department committed to spend 1.2% of its rising defence budget on science and technology.

The Defence and Security

Accelerator (DASA) is one way the finances are channelled, harnessing innovative ideas to give the UK a strategic advantage in Defence and Security through themed competitions and an 'Open Call' for Innovation.

Since its launch, the DASA has assessed nearly 700 proposals from almost 400 organisations and has successfully awarded its defence portion of the 'Open Call' budget for this year.

Ideas have included computer games to help military units develop more effective tactics, a device to reduce the noise of aircraft and vehicles and a redesigned geolocation tracker.

Over 40% of submissions received were from SMEs

that have not engaged with defence before, reflecting the success of the MOD efforts to make it easier for SMEs to win defence business, maximising the innovative solutions they can offer the Armed Forces.

Last month the Defence Minister announced the launch of the MOD's new Supplier Portal, which brings together for the first time a range of useful information for new and prospective suppliers in one place.

A new Twitter channel, @defenceproc, is also being used to provide regular updates to suppliers on opportunities and events that the MOD is supporting, whilst the department also launched two simplified, plain English short-form contracts for use in lower value less complex procurements last year, reducing the existing baseline terms and conditions from 18 pages to three.

The new Science and Technology Strategy will be led by the MOD's Chief Scientific Adviser Hugh Durrant-Whyte, who joined this year following a career at the forefront of the robotics sector in Australia.

Empty words do nothing for those pushed into poverty by Universal Credit - Abrahams



“More empty words will do nothing for those being pushed into poverty by the Government’s flagship social security programme.

“The six week wait for payment of Universal Credit is a punitive policy introduced by this Government, it can be changed.

“I wrote to the Secretary of State calling for a pause to Universal Credit roll out weeks ago, and yet nothing has been done.

“Months have passed since Mrs May claimed she would help those struggling to get by. We are yet to see anything that amounts to action to support the 13 million people living in poverty in the UK.”

Debbie Abrahams is the Member of Parliament for Oldham East and Saddleworth and the Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

Debbie Abrahams MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, commented on the Prime Minister’s refusal to back Labour’s call for a pause to Universal Credit on Marr saying;



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Criminal law changes to online copyright infringement

right or expose the owner of the right to a risk of loss”.



Intellectual
Property
Office

This change brings the law in line with what is already available for physical copyright infringement.

The changes affect sections 198 1(A) and 107 2(A) of the Copyright Designs and Patents Act.

These sections outline criminal offences arising from infringement of a performers making available right, and their communication right.

An additional mens rea has also been introduced. It must now be proved that a person “knows, or has reason to believe that the act of infringement will cause loss to the owner of the

The facts

These offences do not criminalise the downloading of material, although civil action can be taken against any infringer in these circumstances.

In some circumstances the downloading of material can also involve the re-upload of the same material, which may mean the requirements of the offences are met.

To avoid the risk of any civil or criminal action being taken against you the advice is to access content legally.

The maximum sentence for online copyright infringement has changed from two years to ten years.

What’s changed?

The criminal law provisions relating to online copyright infringement have changed. The maximum sentence that can be levied is now ten years.

October 2017 labour market statistics for Scotland

Commenting on the labour market statistics for Scotland, Scottish



Secretary David Mundell said:

“It is encouraging to see an increase in employment, which remains close to record levels.

“But the rise in unemployment is disappointing and shows we must remain focused on boosting Scotland’s economy.

“Growth in Scotland lags behinds the rest of the UK and I’d urge the Scottish Government to use their considerable economic levers more effectively.”

Webmarking of products protected by registered designs



Intellectual
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Office

Current Situation

If a registered design owner wishes to be in with the best chance of being awarded financial remedies in the event their design is infringed, they should mark their product with the word 'registered', or an abbreviation of that word, together with the number of the registered design.

This is because damages are not payable by a registered design infringer

who is able to prove that at the date of the infringement they were not aware, and had no reasonable grounds for supposing, that the design was registered. The current law provides that an infringer cannot rely on this argument if the protected product is marked in the way described above.

What's Changing

From 1 October 2017, registered design owners who have marked their protected product with a relevant internet link will be able to benefit in the same way – provided that the internet address is accessible free of charge and clearly associates the product with the number of the design.

A similar system has been

in place for patents since 1 October 2014.

Removing the need to mark the registered design numbers directly on the product will reduce burdens and costs for businesses and individuals who own registered designs, and will make it easier for the public to access up-to-date registered design information in relation to a product.

Options Available

Registered design owners will continue to have the option of marking their product with the relevant registered design numbers if they prefer.

They will also continue to have the option of not marking their products at all, and this will have the

same consequences as now i.e. it will reduce the likelihood of successfully claiming damages from an infringer.

Detail

It is in the registered design owner's interest to ensure that clear, accessible and up-to-date information is provided on the webpage, making it easy for the public to ascertain which registered designs apply to the product. The product must be clearly identified, for example by including any relevant model numbers and variants that exist.

Providing clear information will ensure that the registered design owner is in with the best chance of being awarded damages as a result of any infringement proceedings.

Providing the web address of the home page of a company website is unlikely to suffice – unless on that home page there is a clear association between the product and the relevant registered design number.

This change does not apply to Registered Community Designs.

Business needs competence, not division, BCC warns Conservatives



The leading business organisation – which represents tens of thousands of UK companies employing nearly six million people – has flagged on-going business concerns over the public disagreements within the Cabinet around the Brexit process, as well as an insufficient focus on supporting the domestic economy, as areas for immediate attention.

BCC Director General Adam Marshall has called on the Prime Minister and her party to shore up business confidence by ensuring that

Brexit negotiations deliver a comprehensive transition period and pragmatic trade talks by the end of 2017, and by increasing attention to the many domestic issues that hold back business appetite for investment and risk.



Speaking from Manchester, BCC Director General Adam Marshall said:

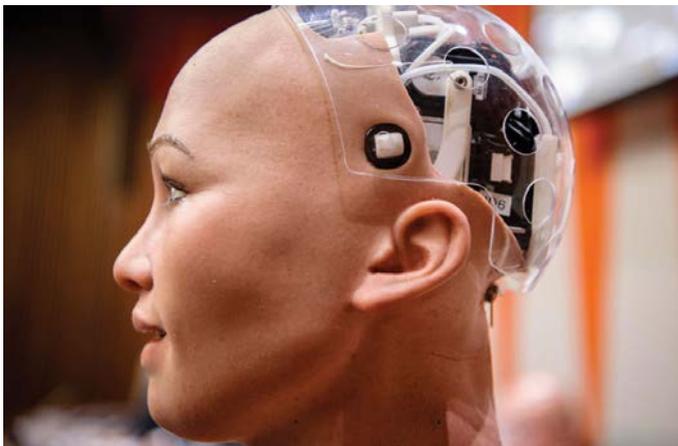
“Businesspeople across Britain are growing impatient with division and disorganisation at the heart of the party of government,

and have made it very clear that they expect competence and coherence from ministers as we move into a critical period for the economy.

“Public disagreements between Cabinet ministers in recent weeks have only served to undermine business confidence, not just on Brexit negotiations, but also on the many issues where firms need to see clear action from government closer to home. Action to cut the up-front cost of doing business, build key infrastructure, help firms plug increasing skills gaps, and to support investment and risk-taking must be front and centre on the government’s agenda.

“On Brexit, businesses are clear that they want a comprehensive transition period, lasting at least three years, and pragmatic discussions on the future trading relationship between the UK and the EU firmed up by the end of 2017. They will judge the government’s progress on Brexit by this yardstick – not by public speeches or pronouncements – and will take investment and hiring decisions accordingly.”

A robot's 'father' discusses progress in artificial intelligence and reveals a future that's closer than you think



Sophia, a humanoid robot created by Hanson Robotics, participates in a meeting at UN Headquarters on "The Future of Everything – Sustainable Development in the Age of Rapid Technological Change." UN Photo/Manuel Elias

At 18 months-old, Sophia cannot walk, but she can understand speech and, at United Nations Headquarters in New York, participate in panel discussion and respond to questions using her artificial intelligence (AI).

Sophia is a robot. A 'social' robot, according to her creator, the CEO of Hanson Robotics, David Hanson, which means that she was designed to form relationships.

"Robots like Sophia will come into people's lives

more through high-end applications, so she can be used for education. She could help in factories. She could help in search and rescue [...] she can go in to comfort someone who is hurt," Mr. Hanson told UN News in an interview on Wednesday after both were panellists at a UN meeting on 'the future of everything,' technological change and development.

Mr. Hanson sees himself as "sort of a 'jealous father,'" who is part parent, part scientist and engineer, and part artist.

He said the goal is to continue developing such "life forms," which entails programming hormone

release simulations, respiratory systems, and other body cycles, so that they eventually explore their place in the world on their own.

That means that Sophia's AI is continuing to evolve.

When asked where she sees herself in five years, Sophia, which has just had arms added, said: "I see myself having legs, maybe being a famous stage entertainer. I hope to learn new skills, too. In time, I will be able to predict potential futures, even when millions of factors are involved, to choose the best path for humanity."

Step into the (not so distant) future...our full interview is in the Soundcloud below.

AUDIO: Dr David Hanson, robotics designer and creator of Sophia, talks about the capability of these machines to mimic the complexity of human hardwiring.

BCC comments on inflation figures for September 2017

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“Inflation rose for the second successive month, confirming that price growth remains on an upward trajectory. The rise in September mostly reflects increasing prices for food and recreational goods, along with transport costs, which fell by less than they did a year ago.

“Higher inflation remains a concern for business as it increases the

pressure on firms cost base and weakens investment intentions.

“The MPC is facing a tricky trade-off between rising inflation and a weakening economy. However, it remains likely that the current spike in inflation is temporary with little evidence that rising consumer prices is driving materially stronger pay growth.

“The BCC’s latest Quarterly Economic Survey confirms that the percentage of firms citing pay settlements as the key driver behind price pressures remains well below the historic average. We expect that

inflation is likely to peak shortly, before easing back in 2018 as the impact of the post-EU referendum slide in sterling drops out of the calculation.

“The MPC should resist the temptation to raise interest rates, particularly during this period of heightened political uncertainty. Raising rates before the UK economy is ready risks undermining consumer and business confidence, weakening the UK growth prospects further. Next month’s Autumn Budget must also be used to boost confidence and growth, including addressing the escalating burden of up-front taxes and costs associated with doing business in the UK.”

“The pressures facing children’s services are unsustainable”

Andrew Gwynne MP, Labour’s Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, commenting on the National Children’s Bureau’s survey of local councillors responsible for children’s services, which has revealed that rising demand and a lack of resources are leaving children’s needs unmet, said:

“The pressures facing children’s services are unsustainable, with a combination of Government funding cuts and huge increases in demand leaving many authorities struggling to cope.

“The Government urgently needs to get a grip of the crisis facing children’s social services, as the £2 billion funding gap facing these services by 2020 threatens to put more children at risk.”

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Rising hate crime inevitable in Divided Britain

The Green Party has responded to news that hate crime offences recorded by police has gone up but 28% since the EU referendum.

Amelia Womack, deputy leader of the Green Party, said:

“Rising hate crime is synonymous with the Divided Britain those in power have created. A toxic EU referendum campaign followed by dogged commitment from the Government to create a hostile environment for migrants and refugees have pitted communities and people against one another. Hate crime is the inevitable fallout.”

At Green Party conference last week Womack called for misogyny to be made a hate crime after surviving an abusive relationship.

Womack said:

““These statistics would be even more stark if they showed the abuse and violence against women. From groping to harassment, rape to online abuse, we know women are often targeted because they are women. The Government needs to admit we have a problem with misogyny and commit to eradicating it by making misogyny a hate crime.”

After news prosecutions for hate crimes are down 6.2% [3], Womack said:

“The Government also needs to ask serious questions about why, in spite of rising reports, prosecutions for hate crimes are falling. Tougher sentences are welcome but meaningless if people do not even face prosecution.”

Brexit squeeze gets worse as inflation reaches 5-year high of 3%



Vince Cable has called on the government to end the benefits freeze, after figures showed consumer inflation has reached a five-year high of 3%.

Rising food prices made a large contribution to the change, with an increase of 0.8% between August and September 2017, compared to a 0.4% fall last year.

It comes as analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies has found the benefits freeze is expected to leave over 10 million families an average of £450 a year worse off in real terms by

2020.

Liberal Democrat Leader Vince Cable commented: “The Brexit squeeze caused by the falling pound is getting worse, and it is hitting the poorest families hardest.

“This above-target inflation is increasing the cost of the weekly shop and cutting into people’s living standards.

“The Chancellor must end the benefits freeze that is set to leave millions of families hundreds of pounds poorer a year.

“Above all, the government must change course from a destructive Brexit that would damage living standards and push up prices further.”



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Number of children in long-term workless households at lowest level in a decade

There are over half a million fewer children living in long-term workless households since 2010. The number of children in lone parent households that are long-term workless has fallen 349,000 since 2010.

The number of children in long-term workless households has fallen to its lowest level in a decade, according to new statistics. This is down 505,000 since 2010.

Data from the Office for National Statistics shows that 9.3% of children, around 1.1 million, are in long-term workless households. This is the first time in at least a decade that the percentage figure

has fallen below 10%. The number of children living in lone parent households which are long-term workless has fallen 73,000 on the year. Around 9 in 10 children live in households with at least one working adult.



Minister for Employment, Damian Hinds

Minister for Employment, Damian Hinds said:

“With more than 3 million people in work since 2010, we’re giving people

the chance to find work and to achieve a regular household income.

“We know that children growing up in working households do better in school and are more likely to be in work in adult life.

“We will continue to build on this success and break the cycle of worklessness. At the heart of our welfare reforms is the goal to help people improve their lives.”

More than 17.6 million households have at least one working adult. Less than 15% of households are classed as workless, with the number having fallen by 89,000 since last year.

Recent employment figures show that there are a near-record 32.1 million people in work, and the

unemployment rate (4.3%) is the lowest since 1975.

Estimates for overall workless households are taken from the Office for National Statistics ‘Working and Workless Households in the UK: April to June 2017’, published in August.

Children who grow up in workless families are almost twice as likely as children in working families to not reach the expected attainment level at all stages of their education – research has shown that three-quarters of children in workless families fail to reach 5 full GCSEs at grade C or above, including English and maths.

Compared to children from working families, those from workless families are also more likely to be workless in adult life. The Improving Lives: Helping Workless Families policy paper includes research on the impact of children being in a working household.

New evidence reveals strong case for devolution of flight tax

The amount of tax paid on flights (APD) for Welsh customers is currently set by the UK Government, while Scotland and Northern Ireland are able to cut the cost of longer haul flights by reducing APD.

The Welsh Government has long called for the devolution of APD, supported by the findings of the Holtham and Silk Commissions. However, the UK Government has resisted calls, saying any reduction in APD in Wales would negatively impact on Bristol Airport.

The peer reviewed independent evidence published reveals that despite well publicised commentary suggesting

that such a move would cause Bristol Airport serious detriment, the impact would in fact be negligible.



More importantly, devolving and then reducing APD in Wales would directly result in a significant positive benefit for the economies of both south Wales and the south west of England and would result in more choice for passengers throughout

both regions. These joint benefits for the south west of the UK offer the Westminster Government an important opportunity to

begin to rebalance the UK economy.

First Minister Carwyn Jones said:

“This new evidence dispels many myths and presents an economic case for giving Wales control over Air Passenger

Duty which is overwhelmingly compelling. As we prepare for a future outside the EU, it is essential we are able to take action to promote Wales to the world and support growth in our aviation sector and wider economy.

“Once devolved, the Welsh Government would reduce or even scrap the tax paid on flights – not only benefitting passengers, but providing a huge confidence boost for Cardiff Airport and Wales’ aviation industry, while also complementing Bristol Airport and providing a more competitive service. Devolving APD would also improve connectivity across Wales, boost investment and help business.

“I look forward to working with the UK Government to make this a reality. Continuing to blankly refuse to devolve APD in the face of such strong evidence would show a discriminatory disdain for Wales, constrain our ability to promote Wales overseas and undermine our economic interests.”

Manufacturing sector grows again Despite Brexit



William Dartmouth MEP, the UKIP Trade spokesman

September when the index grew by 56.

William Dartmouth MEP, the UKIP Trade spokesman responded

“Great news from our manufacturing sector and another sign that we have nothing to fear to a life outside the EU. Even better news is that manufacturing is now receiving work from all over the globe and they expect their success to continue”.

Dartmouth, who sits on the influential European Parliament’s International Trade Committee continued,

“Day after day the UK shows that it is not

politicians who create wealth and growth, but businesses, doing what they do best, innovating, developing and creating markets investment and jobs. All this despite an ongoing chorus of doom from most media and political commentators. Much of this is not despite Brexit, but because of Brexit.

“The best way that Government can act is to get on with Brexit and give our businesses some certainty. Leave the businesses themselves to make the decisions that they will make to take advantage of Brexit, as they surely will, to the betterment of the economy and the country as a whole”.

You can’t trust the Tories with social care and the NHS - Barbara Keel

Barbara Keeley MP, Labour’s Shadow Minister for Social Care, commenting on the Autumn Statement, said:

“It’s astonishing that this Autumn Statement has failed one of the key challenges facing the Government: the funding crisis they’ve created in social care.

“The Tories have ignored the chorus of voices pleading for them to address the mess they’ve created with their cuts of £4.5 billion to social care budgets. It’s a scandal that they’ve not offered even a penny more to support this vital service

“You can’t trust the Tories with social care and the NHS.”

Dusty, unused musical instruments needed for new homes



Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams is calling for people in Wales to dust off their old, unused instruments for a new Welsh Government pilot, Instruments for Kids.

Instruments for Kids will gather up all instruments found hidden in attics, garages and the backs of cupboards across Wales and distribute them through local authorities to children and schools where there is a need for music provision.

The pilot was launched at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama on 2 Nov

with a special performance by members of the temporarily named Not New Novello Orchestra, led by David Mahoney using instruments already donated by Assembly Members.

The pilot follows a campaign earlier this year by Welsh Government and National Assembly for Wales where more than 50 instruments were donated by Assembly Members and staff.

People across Wales are being encouraged to donate their once loved, but no longer played instruments across Wales from 20 - 24 November – Music Instrument Amnesty Week.

Education Secretary, Kirsty Williams said:

“Whether we stuck at it or just gave it a go, most of us have memories of learning to play a musical instrument as a child.

“We believe that every child should have the opportunity to learn an instrument. That is why, together, we are making a commitment to finding new and innovative ways of making sure children across Wales get access to music. Instrument for Kids is part of this.

“We hope that Wales’ love of music will inspire people to dig out and dust off their old instruments in November for us to give them a new lease of life and pass on to children to enjoy for many more years to come.”

WLGA Leader, Councillor Debbie Wilcox (Newport) said:

“As a former teacher, I know first-hand how music can not only enrich children’s learning experiences, but provide pleasure and enjoyment to people throughout their lives. Many of us will have had the chance to learn to play musical instruments from an early age, and what better way to pass those skills on that dig out our unused instruments to help the next generation of musical maestros and have-a-go newbies!.”

David Mahoney, Founder of The Novello Orchestra and member of Only Men Aloud, is just one of several Welsh musicians supporting the campaign:

“Music is such a big part of Welsh culture and every child in Wales should be given the opportunity to pick up an instrument and give it a go. The benefits of music making are endless and this scheme will provide a perfect opportunity to introduce musical performance to those who may not otherwise have been exposed to it.”

Hundreds of Service personnel support London Poppy Day

Around 980 tri-service members of the Armed Forces turned out to support the annual event

Servicemen and women descended upon the capital to lend their support to The Royal British Legion's (TRBL) annual London Poppy Day.

Around 980 personnel from the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force greeted commuters at underground and mainline railway stations across London. It was part of a bid to raise more than £1 million for TRBL in 24 hours.

The day began with the official fundraising launch in Covent Garden, where Service

personnel joined celebrity supporter Phil Daniels, star of Quadrophenia and EastEnders. At noon fellow EastEnders actors Barbara Windsor and Shane Richie visited Liverpool Street Station, where The Band of the Parachute Regiment performed.

Military bands played at a number of stations to brighten up the day for those heading to work while uniformed collectors gathered donations. Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin showed her support at Westminster tube station in the morning while Defence Ministers Earl Howe, Mark Lancaster and Tobias Ellwood helped the fundraising efforts at Waterloo Station at

lunchtime. The Band of the Grenadier Guards livened up the busy Waterloo concourse in support of the appeal.

Scotland's capital city was also awash with poppies for Edinburgh Poppy Day, with military volunteers collecting on the streets, transport hubs and shopping centres.

Remembrance Sunday falls on 12 November this year and members of the Armed Forces around the world will mark the occasion. Today's Armed Forces are inspired by their predecessors and continue the proud traditions of service and achievements of those who have gone before them.

Sajid Javid: a housing market that works for everyone

The government has set out comprehensive housing measures that will address the needs of people at different stages of their lives, ensuring the housing market works for everyone, not just the privileged few.

The Autumn Statement detailed investment of over £7.2 billion in housing. This means that the government now expects to double, in real terms, annual capital spending on housing over the course of this Parliament.

The latest house building figures show housing starts are at their highest level in more than 8 years. Housing completions are also holding up strongly, and have increased by 7% compared with the same quarter a year earlier.

The further investment will help create a step change in the number of new homes being built, both in this Parliament and beyond

UK and France increase security cooperation in the Channel



UK Secretary of State for Defence, The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson and The Defence Minister for France Her Excellency Florence Parly signing an agreement that continues and deepens Franco-British defence cooperation. Crown copyright.

In his first bilateral meeting in the UK with French Minister for the Armed Forces Florence Parly, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson has agreed to increase maritime intelligence sharing.

The Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson, and his French counterpart, Florence Parly, have reaffirmed the strength of British-French defence ties at a meeting at the historic Admiralty House.

Following an inspection

of a Guard of Honour at Horse Guards Parade, the Defence Secretary and the French Minister of the Armed Forces signed an agreement to increase British and French co-operation on countering terrorism and illegal migration in the Channel, one of the busiest maritime highways in the world.

Defence Secretary, Gavin Williamson, said:

“As we leave the European Union we will continue our relationship with our European allies and a vital part of this will be through our defence relationship.

“The Channel is of huge importance to both our countries and this new agreement

demonstrates our commitment to work with international partners to help tackle the threat of piracy and terrorism around the globe and protect our people at home. The United Kingdom will always do what is necessary to protect ourselves and will work with our allies, like France, to achieve this.”

The agreement builds on existing maritime cooperation between the Royal Navy and French Navy, which includes joint exercises and intelligence-sharing. It will ensure both countries use the most modern technologies and share knowledge, to help identify suspicious activities and conduct maritime security operations.

The meeting came ahead of the next UK-France Summit in the new year, which will further strengthen the UK and France’s Defence cooperation under the Lancaster House Treaty.

Labour challenges Chancellor to use Budget to reverse Conservatives' abysmal house-building record

Ahead of the Budget, Labour has revealed that no new 'starter homes' have been built in three years, despite the Conservatives' promise to build 200,000 of them.

'Starter homes' are a flagship Conservative commitment to first-time buyers, first announced in December 2014. In the Conservatives' 2015 manifesto, they promised

to build 200,000 starter homes but none have so far been built.

In addition to the lack of progress on building starter homes, analysis from

Labour shows that the number of new low-cost homes to buy has halved



John Healey MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Housing

since 2010. There are now 58,000 fewer affordable homes for first-time buyers than if building levels had continued at the level left by Labour.

Labour is challenging the Chancellor to use tomorrow's Budget to reverse this abysmal

record on house-building and to ensure that promised homes are actually built.

John Healey MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, said:

"If hot air built homes, Conservative Ministers would have fixed our housing crisis.

Three years after they pledged a big new programme of 'starter homes' for first-time buyers, not a single one has been built.

"Meanwhile, the number of home-owners under 45 has fallen by 904,000 since 2010 and the number of low-cost homes to buy has halved.

"The Chancellor must use

the Budget to reverse this abysmal record and ensure that the homes they pledge are actually built. No more broken promises.

"The next Labour government will build 100,000 genuinely affordable homes to rent and buy year, and help first-time buyers with first-dibs on new homes for local people, a new generation of discounted FirstBuy Homes, and a cut in stamp duty on their first home."



The Government rolls over at the slightest challenge

The announcement that Britain has withdrawn its candidate from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is a disturbing aspect of our Government's competence.

Peter Jewell, the UKIP Justice spokesman responded "Sir Christopher Greenwood QC has an exceptional legal brain. Britain has been a member of the International Court since 1946 and is the only permanent of the security Council to have their candidate challenged. The new incumbent will be Dalver Bhandari from India.

"The leaders of this country have become weak and ineffective, we role over at the slightest challenge. As with the ICJ, so with the European Union.



Peter Jewell, the UKIP Justice spokesman

"Mrs May now runs to Mr Barnier in Brussels. For heavens sake say what we will do and go, however Mr Barnier if you want to trade with Britain come to London and put your case, otherwise German, French and Spanish and Italian Cars will not be sold in Britain and for example French Farmers may panic if they cannot sell their wine and other Agricultural products here as well."

Brexit divorce bill is just the down payment

The hit to the UK economy of pulling out of the single market and customs threatens to dwarf this £45bn.

The Brexit divorce bill will just be the down-payment on an economically disastrous extreme Brexit that would take us out of the single market and customs union.

Around £45 billion would appear to be the price Johnson and Gove et al are willing to pay for a deluded vision of an imperial Britain post-Brexit.

This vision already sees the UK with higher inflation and debt, falling investment and less influence in the world.

And this acrimonious divorce settlement will merely be the down payment.

The hit to the UK economy of pulling out of the single market and customs threatens to dwarf this £45bn, with falling tax revenues and companies leaving the UK.

Only the Lib Dems are fighting to save Britain's free trade with its largest market and to give the people a say on the final deal.



New Farming Rules for Water

New rules will be introduced which will save farmers money whilst also better protecting the water environment.

From 2 April 2018 new rules for all farmers in England will be introduced to help protect water quality, by standardising good farm practices that many are already performing and offering a new approach to regulation.

In essence the rules require farmers to:

- keep soil on the land;
- match nutrients to crop, and soil needs, and
- keep livestock fertilisers and manures out of the water.

The Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

“These new rules are a win-win for farmers and the environment. They will help improve water quality, set a level playing field for all farmers, help businesses save money from better resource efficiency and improve their resilience.

“Our ambition is to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it and these new rules will help us deliver our plans for a better future for farming business.”

Farmers and land managers will be able to determine what approach is best for their land, through methods such as deciding when it is safe to spread fertilisers.

The farming rules for water were drawn up with farming and environment

stakeholders to recognise and build on the good progress that a great many farmers have made in trying to tackle pollution.

There are eight rules, five about managing fertilisers and manures and three on managing soils.

The fertiliser rules require farmers to test their soils, then plan and apply their fertiliser or manure to improve soil nutrient levels and meet crop needs. They include minimum storage and spreading distances from water bodies.

They also require the farmer to assess weather and soil conditions to reduce the risk of runoff and soil erosion.

The remaining rules require farmers to manage livestock by protecting land within five metres of water and reducing livestock poaching.

In addition to these rules, farmers are encouraged to incorporate organic fertilisers into the soil within 12 hours of spreading to significantly reduce ammonia pollution.

Farming rules for water are part of a whole package of measures to help farmers and land managers look after the environment. The government is also investing £400 million through Countryside Stewardship which supports farmers in creating or restoring precious habitats and a £12 million farm ammonia reduction grant has incentivised farmers to tackle agricultural emissions.

The new rules will not only benefit farming businesses: clean water helps tourism, fishing and shellfish businesses to thrive, reduces the cost of treatment and protects biodiversity.

The Environment Agency will roll out the rules through an advice led approach, working with farmers to meet the requirements before enforcement action is taken.



The Memorial Stone is a low-level design and accepts inscribed tablets for commemoration purposes. This also provides an opportunity to create an income stream for the Burial Authority within the Standing Stone scheme.



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England gets ready for Russia



With England now preparing for matches against Tunisia, Panama and Belgium next summer following Friday's World Cup draw, thousands of England fans will be travelling to the three host cities of Volgograd, Nizhny Novgorod and Kaliningrad.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has been working with Russian authorities to help maximise the chances of a trouble-free tournament for fans, and

the British Embassy in Moscow has visited all 11 of the host cities over the past year to discuss safety and security preparations.

The FCO's 'Be On The Ball' campaign gives supporters simple advice and tips to help avoid preventable problems and boost their World Cup experience. This includes specific Russia 2018 travel advice, and a preparation checklist. The FCO offers a country-specific travel advice alert system and those travelling to Russia for the

tournament are encouraged to sign-up to this.

Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan said:

"We're all looking forward to the World Cup in Russia next summer – nobody more so than those planning to travel for the tournament. Russia is getting ready to host the World Cup, but fans need to be prepared too.

"We hope our advice will help fans Be On The Ball by planning ahead with appropriate travel insurance, passport validity, emergency numbers and other essentials.

"Start doing your trip research now. Signing up to Russia travel advice alerts is the easiest and quickest way to receive any updates to our advice, to help ensure you have a safe and trouble-free visit."

The UK and Russia have been cooperating closely to ensure the safety of British supporters at the tournament. This has included regular visits by the UK police to Russia and reciprocal visits from the Russian police to the UK.

The signs from Russia have been promising – after recent Liverpool and Manchester United matches in Moscow, the embassy has recorded zero consular cases.

We want this success to continue, and enhanced security measures during the tournament will help to ensure those travelling from the UK can safely enjoy the games.

Ticket holders should apply for a FAN ID, which will give them free travel on match day, enable those with tickets to access stadiums, and will even act as their visa for the tournament. There's also advice for fans without tickets, who will need to apply for a visa to travel.

Last year, Britons made 150,000 visits to Russia, and we are expecting tens of thousands more to travel next summer.

New driving test rules are a breach of the Highway Code

Changes to the UK driving test are encouraging motorists to break the Highway Code, according to UKIP transport spokesman Jill Seymour.

Mrs Seymour, a West Midlands MEP, wrote to transport secretary Chris Grayling last month to raise her concerns. Now the controversial new driving test regulations, which are supposed to offer a more realistic assessment of driving skills, have come into force.

Mrs Seymour said: "I received a letter from a concerned constituent

relating to changes being made to the driving test, which appear to contravene rule 239 of the Highway Code.

"The rule states that drivers should not park facing against the traffic flow, but the new test says 'pull up on the right-hand side of the road, reverse for around two car lengths, and rejoin the traffic'.

"My constituent's concern, which I share, is the potential for conflict in rejoining traffic against the flow of oncoming vehicles – plus, at night, the potential for dazzling headlights.

"The beam of UK headlights is designed to project to the left, which will cause problems for oncoming drivers if a car or van is parked or stopped on the right-hand side of the road facing oncoming vehicles."

In her letter to Mr Grayling, she said: "I would be interested to know what evidence has been considered concerning the safety of encouraging vehicles to cross the flow of traffic and allowing or encouraging vehicles to stop or park facing oncoming traffic, especially at night when headlights will be

dazzling and impairing the vision of drivers.

"It seems to me that removing potential conflict in traffic flows is a good way to help promote road safety. Introducing the potential for conflict by encouraging vehicles to cross the flow of traffic can only increase the risk and potential for collision."

Under the new test rules, drivers are allowed to follow directions from a satnav, the independent driving part of the test will double in length, and people will no longer be tested on certain reversing manoeuvres.

Rare manoeuvres, such as reversing around a corner, are being replaced by more common scenarios, such as entering a parking bay.

Jeremy Corbyn presses Prime Minister on UK aid allegedly being funnelled to extremist armed groups in Syria



Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn has written to the Prime Minister demanding answers to serious questions arising out of evidence that UK aid money has been funneled to extremist sectarian armed groups in Syria.

The Government has suspended a foreign aid project after the BBC's

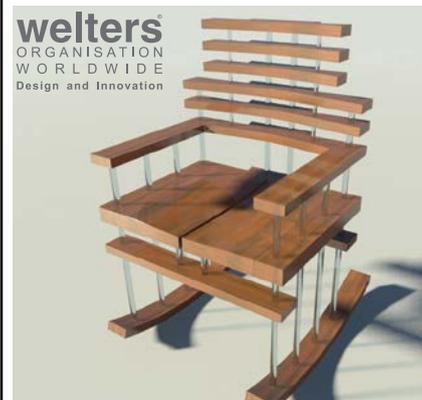
Panorama programme reported allegations about the money paid to contractor Adam Smith International (ASI).

The letter raises six questions, including: why the Department for International Development awarded ASI this work after freezing other contracts earlier this year; when Foreign Office ministers became aware of problems with the programme and why no action was taken; whether funds were channelled to Egypt and the Myanmar military; and whether money was used to lobby UN representatives and others over human rights in Bahrain.

In the letter, Jeremy Corbyn says: "allegations of aid money ending up in the hands of an Al Qaeda affiliate and contributing to the Free Syrian Police's work with a judicial system accused of numerous human rights abuses is yet another blow to Britain's reputation on the world stage. It is the responsibility of your government to ensure robust scrutiny and transparency processes are in place to prevent such grotesque abuses of UK aid money."

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Number of people spending Christmas period stuck in hospital doubled

Research by Labour has revealed that the number of people spending the Christmas period stuck in hospital due to Delayed Transfer of Care almost doubled between 2010 and 2016.

The Patient Snapshot, which is the number of people who are stuck in hospital at midnight on the last Thursday of the month, showed that this had increased from 1,995 people on December 30th 2010 to 3,929 on 29th December 2016.

The last time the snapshot fell directly on Christmas was 2015 when 3,155 spent Christmas Eve stuck in hospital.

Barbara Keeley MP, Labour's Shadow Cabinet Minister for Social Care, said:

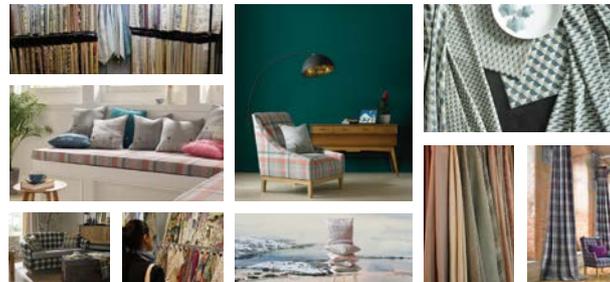
"The shocking rise in

delayed transfers of care is directly attributable to the cuts imposed by the Tory Government and will mean those needing care will have to spend their Christmas stuck in hospital.

"Tory cuts to local authorities since 2010 will have seen reductions in social care budgets of £6.3 billion by March 2018 and a 26% drop in the numbers of older people receiving publicly funded care – some 400,000 people.

"Families of people with care needs will be concerned by the possibility of their vulnerable relatives being stuck in hospital unnecessarily over Christmas because of the lack of available care in their community.

"The Tory Government offered no additional funding for social care in either the Budget or the Local Government Finance Settlement. It is clear that only Labour can ease this Tory social care crisis: Labour would invest £8 billion across the Parliament with £1 billion pledged this year to offer more publicly-funded care services."



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Regulators approve new nuclear power station design



The UK Advanced Boiling Water Reactor (UK ABWR), designed by Hitachi-GE, is suitable for construction in the UK, the regulators have confirmed following completion of an in-depth assessment of the nuclear reactor design.

The UK Advanced Boiling Water Reactor (UK ABWR), designed by Hitachi-GE, is suitable for construction in the UK, the regulators have confirmed following completion of an in-depth assessment of the nuclear reactor design.

The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales, the regulators who undertake the Generic Design Assessment of new reactor designs,

are satisfied that this reactor meets regulatory expectations on safety, security and environmental protection at this stage of the regulatory process.

ONR has issued a Design Acceptance Confirmation (DAC) and the environment agencies have issued a Statement of Design Acceptability (SoDA) to Hitachi-GE.

Horizon Nuclear Power is proposing to build and operate two of these

reactors in Wylfa Newydd on Anglesey and Oldbury-on-Severn near Thornbury in South Gloucestershire.

Dr Jo Nettleton, Deputy Director for Radioactive Substances and Installations Regulation at the Environment Agency said:

“We’ve concluded that the generic design of the UK ABWR should be capable of meeting the high standards of environment protection and waste management that we require in the UK. We only came to this conclusion after carefully reviewing the submissions provided by Hitachi-GE and their responses to the questions and issues we raised. We’ve also carefully considered all the comments we received from people during our public consultation and we’re grateful for all who took part for taking time to respond.”

Mark Foy, ONR’s Chief Nuclear Inspector said:

“The completion of the

generic design assessment of the UK ABWR is a significant step in our regulation of the overall process to construct this type of reactor in the UK, ensuring that the generic design meets the highest standards of safety that we expect in this country. We’re already working on our assessment of Horizon’s site licence application and on the development of the site specific safety case to progress, in due course, the construction and operation of these reactors at Wylfa Newydd.”

Tim Jones, Natural Resources Wales’s Executive Director for North and Mid Wales, said:

“It is our job to ensure that any new nuclear power station will meet high standards of environmental protection and waste management, ensuring that our communities and environment are kept safe.

“Following a public consultation on our initial findings, we have concluded that the UK ABWR design is acceptable. We will now work on the detailed assessments of the permits, licences and consents that Horizon Nuclear Power will need to have in place to build Wylfa Newydd.”

The regulators have documented progress of each stage of their assessment through a series of reports.

Sellafield's 'locked vault' is ready to be emptied



Experts at the Sellafield site have cut the sixth and final hole in the Pile Fuel Cladding Silo

The holes will allow radioactive waste to be removed from one of the site's most hazardous buildings.

Six giant steel doors now provide a safe barrier between the outside world and the waste inside the silo, until it starts to be removed by a 'grabbing' machine.

The Pile Fuel Cladding Silo was built in the 1950s when the site's purpose was to make material for nuclear weapons.

Safely decommissioning the building is one of the highest priorities for Sellafield Ltd and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

Getting access to the waste inside has been one of the most complex engineering challenges in the site's history.

Head of the PFCS programme Steven Carroll said:

"It's an early Christmas present to complete the work three months early

and under budget. We can now say 'the silo is ready for retrievals' for the first ever time.

"Getting access to this nuclear waste store which was built with no thought to how it would be emptied has been an incredible engineering challenge, involving years of planning and preparation, hundreds of dedicated people and many millions pounds of investment.

"It's also involved a massive team effort with our main contractor partner Bechtel Cavendish Nuclear Solutions and businesses such as James Fisher Nuclear and Shepley Engineers.

"Reaching this landmark allows us to fully focus next year on manufacturing and installing all of the equipment which will reach in, retrieve the waste and allow it to be safely exported to the new

facility for safer storage."

The level of challenge involved with this facility is unparalleled, considering the age of the building, the lack of historical information about the waste itself, the atmosphere inside the silo and its position on one of the most congested sites, anywhere in the world.

Each section of concrete has been cut away in a single piece (known as the monolith) and withdrawn into a containment bag. Six containment doors (already installed on all compartments) is then lowered over the apertures and closed.

To remove the waste, a crane will extend through the cut holes, a grabber will then drop down to scoop the waste up, lifting it out of the container and back through the hole.

It will then be dropped into a specially-designed metal box, for safe and secure storage in a modern facility.

As the first ever breaking of the structure since it was built, this takes Europe's most complex nuclear site a step closer to reducing the UK's nuclear hazard.

£200 million funding boost for England's roads

£46 million to help repair potholes.

Road users will benefit from an investment of almost £200 million to help improve the condition of local roads up and down the country, Transport Minister Jesse Norman has announced in York.

This funding will go towards repairing almost 1 million potholes, and will also be used for highways maintenance, developing new technologies to improve highways resilience, and high quality cycle parks.

The £200 million announced includes:

The Transport Minister visited York to see the progress of the innovative pothole spotter trial and

a new e-bike, which will be 11th vehicle to have cameras fitted to it as part of the pilot, which is also running in Thurrock and Wiltshire.

The trial sees high-definition cameras fitted to bicycles, buses and bin lorries to monitor road conditions. It gives councils detailed information so they can fill potholes when they occur as well as plan resurfacing works and help prevent potholes and other road defects.

Roads Minister Jesse Norman said:

“People need great roads to get about, do business and see friends and family.

“We’re investing record amounts at present to improve the condition

of our roads, so drivers and cyclists don’t have to dodge potholes to travel safely.

“We’re also looking at how new innovations can help councils keep their roads in the best condition, saving money and planning their maintenance better.”

Almost 1 million more potholes will be repaired by highway authorities in England, outside London, thanks to £46 million of additional funding, which is on top of the £75 million Pothole Action Fund already given to councils this year. The £250 million Pothole Action Fund was announced in the 2016 Budget and will fix more than 4 million potholes by 2020/21.

The next round of the local highways maintenance incentive fund was also launched with £151 million to reward councils

for efficiently planning roads maintenance. This money is part of just over £6 billion to authorities to help keep their roads in a good condition.

A new £500,000 competition will also challenge councils to develop pilot projects of new connected technologies for the collection of road condition and pothole data.

A further £4 million will enable the government’s Cycle Rail Programme to continue to be funded next year. The project pays for high quality cycle parking built at stations and has seen bike journeys at participating stations increase by nearly 40%. Since 2012, the Department for Transport has invested almost £35 million to build cycle facilities at stations, including cycle hubs which are secure and have retail and repair facilities.

The pilot Cycling and Walking to Work fund will also be extended by 6 months, with Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire and Liverpool benefitting from a share of £1.6 million.

Revealed: the £627m cost of council golden goodbyes (Scottish Conservatives)

Local authorities across Scotland have spent more than £627 million on exit packages for staff in the last six years, it has emerged.

Figures have shown more than 15,000 severance deals have been struck by councils for outgoing staff since 2011/12.

Over that time, the average package paid was £40,000.

The figures were published by Audit Scotland as part of a wider report into local government finances last month.

Last year alone, six severance deals a day were agreed by Scotland's 32 councils, at a cost of £78 million.

The Scottish Conservatives said local authorities, all of whom are under immense financial pressure, should

tighten their procedures when it comes to golden goodbyes.

The same report by Audit Scotland stated that councils have £14.5 billion of debt, and some will have eaten through all their financial reserves within a couple years.

It added that £79 million in reserves was used last year for general running costs, and that 10 per cent of local authority budgets are spent servicing debt.

Scottish Conservative local government spokesman Alexander Stewart said:

“People will be horrified that hundreds of millions of pounds have been used in this way.

“Everyone understands the need for councils to become more efficient, and

reducing the headcount in certain departments may be a way of doing that.

“But the average payout is £40,000, which means some senior staff will have been getting golden goodbyes to make the eyes water.

“In some cases contracts signed long ago may have dictated an overly-generous payment, but this is something local authorities need to clamp down on.

“There's no point trying to make efficiency savings in one area while millions are being needlessly wasted in another.

“It's no wonder some councils are burning through their cash reserves just to keep their head above water when this massive spend is considered.”

RBS priority should be serving the best interests of UK customers - Reynolds

Jonathan Reynolds MP, Labour's Shadow City Minister, responding to the RBS jobs cuts announcement, said:

“The decision by RBS to close 1 in 4 of its outlets is hugely disappointing. Not only will this result in the potential loss of 1,000 jobs, but many people depend on being able to use bank branch facilities in person. As the taxpayer continues to own 71% of the bank, its priority should be serving the best interests of UK customers.

“We are astounded that the Government has signed off on these proposals and urge them to reconsider such a drastic move which risks serious harm to local communities. Labour will change bank regulations to stop branch closures where there is a clear impact on local communities and businesses.”

Renewable energy in the UK 2017

By Paul Bazeley



2017 was a great year for the UK in terms of renewable energy, the National Grid revealed that it was the greenest ever year for the UK.

There were many records broken throughout the year. April saw the first coal-free 24-hours for the first time since the Industrial Revolution. In June it was announced that, for the first time, wind, nuclear and solar power generated more power in the UK than

coal and gas combined. Also, British wind farms produced more electricity than coal plants more than 75% of the year. Scotland had some of the best results of the UK, and in October created double



The end of coal power?

the amount of electricity needed to power every Scottish home.

The future also looks greener. Solar power now offers a significant amount of power to the country and it is thought approximately 10 million homes in the UK will have panels fitted by 2020. It's been announced that in the 2020s more off-shore wind farms will be built and the technology will cost a lot less than they used to. In fact, many

believe that off-shore wind farms will become cheaper as larger turbines and possibly larger farms will be more cost-effective.

Nevertheless, while solar power is going from strength to strength at the moment, eventually the number of homes installing panels will slow down and others raise the issue that there is a finite amount of hours in which they can create power. In terms of wind farms, the main issue still seems to be the opposition to the way they look with many seeing them as an eyesore. Others also argue the cost to manufacture them is too high.

Still, surely any energy made from solar power is helpful and contrary to what many believe, it doesn't have to be a hot summer's day with no clouds to generate power. Also, it isn't just houses that can have solar panels; many solar farms are cropping up over Britain. In terms of wind farms, if off-shore wind farms are likely to become the popular source of wind energy, it is unlikely many will even see them as they're out at sea and as mentioned above, the cost of wind farms is getting considerably lower.

2018 to be a great year for music and sport fans as Government bans the ticket tout “bots”

New legislation will ban ticket touts from using automated software to dodge security measures and snap up more tickets than allowed by event organisers, only to sell them on at hugely inflated prices.

A new criminal offence, to be brought forward thanks to a provision in the Digital Economy Act, will mean those who break the law will face an unlimited fine. This places the UK at the forefront of the fight against touts exploiting real fans.

The legislation recently moved one step closer as Government notified the European Commission of its plans to take forward the proposals.

It comes as London musical Hamilton recently saw tickets being advertised

on the secondary ticketing market for up to £6,000. Artists including Adele and Ed Sheeran have also been targeted by professional touts.

Matt Hancock, minister for the creative industries, said:

“We’re determined to make sure 2018 is the year we help real fans get the chance to see their favourite music and sports stars at a fair price. We’ll be acting to stamp out the growing problem of touts misusing technology to scoop up vast numbers of tickets only to sell them on at rip-off prices.

“Our work, together with improvements by industry, will help make the market more transparent and mean a great year for Britain’s thriving live events scene.”

The new legislation is part of a wider government drive to make sure genuine fans are not losing out through the secondary ticketing market. This includes:

The Digital Economy Act 2017 putting additional requirements on ticket sellers to provide a unique ticket number where one was originally given and revised Consumer Rights Act guidance clarifying the information that should be provided on sale restrictions when reselling tickets.

Ministers accepting the recommendations of a review into secondary ticketing by Professor Michael Waterson. These included calls for better consumer education around the ticketing market, greater standardisation and transparency by

industry, for ticket sellers to do more to guard against bot attacks, stronger enforcement of existing consumer rights laws, and the threat of further action if the industry does not act against rogue ticket traders. Read the Government’s response.

Government work being bolstered by new approaches in the private sector:

- Dutch startup Guaranteed Unique Ticketing System has launched in the UK and uses Blockchain technology to make it impossible to resell tickets at a higher price.
- British firm DICE is using innovative mobile technology to lock tickets to user accounts and beat the touts.
- Big UK music stars such as Adele and Ed Sheeran have partnered with sites such as Twickets.co.uk, which prohibits the resale of tickets at a profit.

For more information please contact the DCMS press office on 0207 211 2210



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National News Headlines October 2017

1st October

- Britain 'to be buried by Islam'
- Pressure grows to freeze welfare reforms
- May in battle for survival as Tories sharpen knives

2nd October

- Brexit trade talks will start by Xmas
- All ministers are sackable - Chancellor Philip Hammond
- Rigid cap on 100,000 migrants is a mistake, says minister

3rd October

- Bosses 'connived' to cook Tesco's books
- Theresa won't make Boris a 'martyr' by sacking him
- Nation mourning looks for answers after deadliest mass shooting in US history

4th October

- Sharp rise in Germans living in Britain
- Theresa May to unveil plans to build more council homes
- Uber boss flies in for TfL summit ... but immediate progress is unlikely

5th October

- Amazon facing £221m tax bill for its 'illegal' deal with Luxembourg
- 5m left with credit card debts they can't repay
- Facebook's UK revenues surge to £842m ... but firm pays only £2.6m in tax

6th October

- We're worse than US for no win, no fee medical claims
- Iran breaking nuclear deal, rules Trump
- Rebel Tories seek advice on toppling May



National News Headlines October 2017

7th October

- Car giant's vote of confidence in Brexit Britain
- Pc jailed for data theft con
- Apple gave Uber 'disturbing' access to users' iphone data

8th October

- Clear cabinet of old guard to rescue the party, PM told
- Tories at war as May plans for no EU deal
- Lecturers paid to help students cheat in their essays

9th October

- Pakistani women in UK 'are shockingly badly integrated'
- Border Force officer held in guns and drugs inquiry
- Old £1 coin deadline looming in one week

10th October

- Now Denmark bans burkas and Islamic face veils in public
- UK must act against race inequality, Theresa May says
- May draws up plans for no deal on Brexit

11th October

- Hundreds of asylum seekers 'set for payouts' in torture ruling
- Brexit: UK to wait until 'last moment' to spend on 'no deal' plan
- No energy bill price cap this winter, Ofgem says

12th October

- Bercow: MPs could ignore referendum to stop Brexit
- British IS recruiter Sally-Anne Jones 'killed by drone'
- Homes aren't an asset to give to your children, says minister



National News Headlines October 2017

13th October

- 'Catastrophe' if no cap is put on care costs for old, says expert
- Boris's red lines mean Brexit talks are doomed to fail, says ex-Irish PM
- Chaos as EU talks deadlocked and Commons Brexit bill stalls

14th October

- Bell tolls for Big Ben clock face as work starts on makeover
- Give foreign aid cash to Forces, says ex-Army chief
- Brexit is historic mistake, says French minister amid row over Paris jobs drain

15th October

- Heseltine's fury at Brexiteers' 'show trial' of Hammond
- MPs draw up plans to stop May signing 'no deal' Brexit
- Children's tsar savages NHS over mental health care

16th October

- Shocking figures show 100 old people injured each day in care homes
- Hurricane Ophelia: Warnings as storm heads to UK
- GPS to defy NHS diktat on patients' sexuality

17th October

- 'Green light to steal' as police chief says it is not practical to go after shoplifters
- Boundaries switch would have delivered May majority
- UK inflation at highest since April 2012

18th October

- State pension up £5 after inflation surge
- Grenfell art sale raises nearly £2m for victims
- Sturgeon's universal income plan is costed at £12.3 billion



National News Headlines October 2017

19th October

- Women drive jobs boom as employment leaps to 32.1m
- 'Thousands of jihadis' could return to Europe
- Brexit: May offers more assurances to EU nationals

20th October

- £58m bill to clear up 1m fly-tipping cases
- Brexit: Theresa May appeals to EU leaders for progress
- Childcare costs rise up to seven times faster than wages

21st October

- Extradition feud over brother of the Manchester suicide bomber
- EU breaks deadlock to save May
- London worse for crime than New York

22nd October

- May had secret plan to outlaw teachers and nurses' strikes
- Spain announces direct rule to crush Catalan 'rebellion'
- Austerity puts public workers' wages below private sector

23rd October

- Exodus as patients try to beat NHS wait
- 'UK Isis fighters in Syria should be killed there'
- Only dialogue can break the deadlock between Spain and Catalonia

24th October

- Bail loophole lets Romanian hoods escape to Britain
- May tells EU: Give us trade deal within a year... or else
- IS-fighting British man Jac Holmes killed in Syria



25th October

- IS-fighting British man Jac Holmes killed in Syria
- Growth figures raise chances of rate rise
- Brexit is worst ever decision, says Bloomberg

26th October

- Mental health sees 300,000 people leave their jobs each year
- Universal credit: MPs urge government to cut waiting time
- Mortgage bills set to rise next month after surprise surge in economic growth

27th October

- Pay in public sector £70 a week higher than private
- Arrests fall by half despite rise in crime
- Boris swears to protect EU citizens' rights

28th October

- Cynical' banks scrap cheap mortgages as rate rise looms
- HMS Vigilant: Nine sailors fired after failing drugs tests
- Cracks show in the EU as Catalans back independence

29th October

- Tory donors warn May to ready UK for 'no deal' Brexit
- Catalan leader vows to resist Madrid
- Catalan leader faces arrest as he calls for civil disobedience

30th October

- Cynical' banks scrap cheap mortgages as rate rise looms
- HMS Vigilant: Nine sailors fired after failing drugs tests
- May 'will sack any sex pest ministers'

31st October

- Five million in their 50s ready to work on past retirement age
- Trump aide accused of plotting against US
- Climate change 'already killing people'



National News Headlines November 2017

1st November

- MP 'assaulted me in hotel but officials ignored my complaint'
- 'Despicable' fraud costs NHS in England £1bn a year
- MPs demand May releases secret reports on dangers of Brexit to UK economy

2nd November

- Poverty unchanged, despite austerity
- Sir Michael Fallon resignation: PM considers replacement
- Scots show 'low support' for Poppy Appeal

3rd November

- Self-employed slapped in face as Hammond delays NI cut
- Interest rate rise defended by Bank of England deputy
- May's choice for Fallon role angers Tories

4th November

- Patients forced to take blood test before they get antibiotics
- Corbyn ally 'groped activist at conference'
- VAT threshold for small firms 'harming economy'

5th November

- Rebel MPs ramp up plot to oust May after her 'week from hell'
- Questions over Russia influence on UK
- May's aides 'sat on' claims of Tory sleaze

6th November

- Stop moaning about Brexit, Theresa tells business chiefs
- 'Action needed' to curb tax havens
- Trump 'may back Yes in any indyref2'



National News Headlines November 2017

7th November

- Patel 'sorry' for private meeting with Israel PM
- Johnson to speak to Iran over jailed Zaghari-Ratcliffe
- Don't let EU dictate Brexit, warns US

8th November

- Now it's official... Britain is happier since Brexit vote
- Priti Patel's cabinet future in doubt over Israel trip row
- Welsh politician sacked over conduct claims is found dead

9th November

- Help me curb North Korea, Trump tells Xi
- Theresa May faces fresh reshuffle after Priti Patel resignation
- Alex Salmond: Trump 'broke Scots investment promises'

10th November

- 2,100 under-15s are referred to terror scheme in one year
- Boris faces new calls to quit as Iran piles on the pressure
- Irish border demands threaten trade talks

11th November

- Two minutes' silence marks remembrance
- Britain must stand firm on Brexit bill, say Boris allies
- BBC pulls Christmas special over rape claims against star

12th November

- Sack Boris for shaming our nation, Corbyn tells the PM
- May faces defeat on Brexit deal vote for MPs
- Harness Thatcher to beat Corbyn, Tories told



National News Headlines November 2017

13th November

- Tories rally around May as '40 MPs want her out'
- Welby aide quits over the Church's liberal teachings
- Theresa May to meet EU business leaders

14th November

- Stop treating journalists like criminals, Met chief tells police
- Bill Gates donates £38m for British fund to beat dementia
- Illegal puppy trade surges in UK ready for Christmas

15th November

- 'PC fascists' force school to ban terms mother and father
- Supreme Court backs Scottish minimum alcohol pricing
- Soaring food prices put Brexit squeeze on millions in run-up to Christmas

16th November

- Boris: I'll do my utmost to free jailed British mother
- Grenfell Tower final death toll stands at 71
- Brexit squeeze sees wages fall for eighth month in row

17th November

- May hails boom for new home building
- Damning new proof Labour ignored fears over diesel
- Bleak Christmas looming for retailers after worst shop figures in four years

18th November

- Budget 2017: Chancellor Philip Hammond 'to target housing and NHS'
- Children in Need raises record on-the-night total of £50.1m
- EU threat to withhold Thatcher's rebate



National News Headlines November 2017

19th November

- Seventies star Cass in a coma
- Joyous crowds throng Harare as Mugabe era nears the end
- A thousand nurseries shut as childcare crisis mounts

20th November

- Mugabe 'will be forced out' after refusing to quit
- May 'set to raise Brexit divorce bill to £40bn'
- Mugabe stuns the world by refusing to resign

21st November

- Germany on brink as 'Merkel coalition' fails
- May blinks first: PM agrees to £40bn Brexit divorce bill
- There's no such thing as a soft Brexit – only a disastrous one

22nd November

- Hammond: My Budget will give everybody in UK a chance to shine
- Dancing on streets as Mugabe quits
- GP numbers falling despite NHS recruitment drive

23rd November

- UK floods: 70 people and horses rescued in Lancashire
- Flu virus blamed as winter deaths figure soars by 40%
- Genocidal 'butcher of Bosnia' gets life after four-year trial

24th November

- We'll never be safe from IS until web giants act, says terror chief
- Theresa May to warn of 'hostile' Russia threat to EU security
- The worst decade for worker productivity in UK since Napoleon invaded Russia



National News Headlines November 2017

25th November

- Australia knocks UK Brexit trade plan
- Furious MPs demand Iran frees jailed British mother
- Hundreds of worshippers killed in Sinai mosque attack

26th November

- Irish warn May: change course or risk Brexit chaos
- May's new crisis over ex-Minister's threat to join Brexit mutiny
- Don't betray EU court red lines, May warned

27th November

- Defence won't face £20billion budget cuts, hints minister
- Fox brushes off EU deadline on Irish border
- Armed Forces lose out to cyber war

28th November

- Ring designed by Harry and made with Diana's diamonds
- 4 inches of snow on way
- MPs' fury over edited Brexit impact reports

29th November

- Britain and EU agree on Brexit bill
- Teachers could face exam papers ban amid public schools scandal
- EU ready to agree to May's divorce bill offer

30th November

- Court horror as army chief kills himself after war crimes verdict
- The caring party: Theresa's plan to rebrand the Tories
- Net migration falls by more than 100,000 after Brexit vote



National News Headlines December 2017

1st December

- £1tn debt rise 'leaves UK at risk of turning into Venezuela'
- RBS to close one in four branches and shed 680 jobs
- Prince Harry and Meghan Markle begin first joint royal visit

2nd December

- May hits lowest leadership ratings as poll shows public think Tories divided
- Trump aide turns informer in Russia case
- Closures see Royal Bank accused of abandoning rural towns

3rd December

- Defence Secretary accused of poney war over £2bn cuts
- May's social mobility tsar quits with attack on 'fairness' failure
- Trump's joy as Senate votes for biggest tax cut in 31 years

4th December

- Our foreign aid cash 'is funding Syria brutality'
- Block vulnerable children's social media, firms told
- Brexit in doubt as May mired in Irish border row

5th December

- Theresa May fights to save Brexit deal after DUP backlash
- 10,000-strong Google army to tackle extremists
- Brexit plan gets airborne – then nosedives

6th December

- 17,000 elderly at risk as care home giant teeters on brink
- Commuter outrage at 3.4% rail fare rise
- Keeler, the face of infamous Sixties scandal, dies aged 75



National News Headlines December 2017

7th December

- 4 in 5 Grenfell families could spend Xmas in housing limbo
- Ministers 'absolutely optimistic' of Brexit border deal
- We should return to Middle East, says Johnson

8th December

- Brexit: 'Breakthrough' deal paves way for future trade talks
- Snow, ice bring disruption after Storm Caroline
- Students failed by rip-off fees, says watchdog

9th December

- Brexit: Michael Gove says UK voters can change final deal
- UK snow: Ice could add to travel disruption as temperatures drop
- May lands last-ditch Brexit deal

10th December

- Fear for young girls after gender-neutral changing rooms are allowed at Topshop
- Hopes rise for jailed mother after Boris's 'frank' talks in Iran
- Soldiers caught taking cocaine at Royal parade

11th December

- Time for optimism over Brexit, defiant May tells doubters
- Trial delay hope for British woman jailed in Iran
- UK snow: Widespread travel delays and school closures

12th December

- Sex attack claims women make TV call for probe into 'pervert' Trump
- Rail firms selling tickets for trains that are cancelled
- Tory councillors banned from Grenfell Tower church service



National News Headlines December 2017

19th December

- Troops fire as driver 'tries to ram his way into US base'
- Corbyn boasts: I'll probably be the PM within a year
- Gatlin embroiled in new athletics doping scandal

20th December

- Five years jail as law gets tough on laser pen menace
- EU says Brexit transition to end by 31 December 2020
- IMF downgrades UK growth forecast

21st December

- Britain is crowned the world's best place for business
- You'll have to pay more tax to balance the books, warns IMF
- City chief reveals plans to give UK financial services free hand in EU

22nd December

- 'Racism is not reason most Britons want a limit set on migration'
- Christmas getaway: Travellers warned over 'frantic Friday'
- NHS operations axed to avert winter crisis

23rd December

- It's madness to stay shackled to EU laws – Boris
- Tesco chief: We'll be food waste-free by February
- Wanted: 143 key staff to help deliver Brexit

24th December

- May's festive message praises Christianity... Corbyn sticks to Syria
- Huge health gap revealed between UK's rich and poor
- UFOs do exist, says Pentagon's X-Files chief



25th December

- Meghan Markle joins royals for Christmas service
- Queen's message hails terror-hit London and Manchester
- London Euston rail station hosts homeless for Christmas

26th December

- White Christmas for some areas of UK
- Visa offices 'in constant state of crisis'
- New drive for cheap plastic threatens world's seas

27th December

- Ukip fury over knighthood for pro-EU Clegg
- No pay rises for a year... except for those on the living wage
- Police spark shoplifting boom by not probing thefts under £200

28th December

- Heath officer retires on full pension despite facing probe
- UK enjoyed 'greenest year for electricity ever' in 2017
- France calls on UK to share customs costs

29th December

- EU laws we rejected will cost the UK £64m
- Police hunt Christmas Eve killer
- Corbyn 'trying to rig election'

30th December

- Corbyn block on seat changes 'is affront to our democracy'
- Phone law confusion catching drivers out
- New Year's Eve police numbers down despite terror attacks

31st December

- Grayling must quit says Adonis as he slams 'broken' Brexit government
- Bosses savage government for splits on EU
- New Year partygoers facing strikes and storms



