



Government *WORLD*™

Summer 2017 Edition

Contents

Paul's News Roundup	3
Wales: Free prescriptions are a long term investment in people's health – Vaughan Gething	6
UKIP: Numbers do matter Minister	6
Taxpayer's stake in Lloyds now below 2%	7
Green Party to investigate three day weekends	8
Disgraceful that Theresa May calls for closer UK ties with brutal Saudi Arabia	8
New measures to unlock brownfield land for thousands of homes	9
Dangerous extremists to be separated from mainstream prison population	10
Almost half of UK firms hit by cyber breach or attack in the past year	11
Environment Agency takes a stand on illegal waste	12
Roman treasures found on A1	14
New water choice for English businesses	15
Rare Meissen figure at risk of leaving the UK	16
Calls for investigation into SNP Government announcement	17
Happy retirement Prince Philip	17
SNP literacy figures are "an absolute disgrace" - Gray	18
EU agencies celebrate EuropeDay together	18
Green Party slams UKIP aid proposal	19
Ryanair Brexit warning shows risk of "no deal" for UK travellers	19
The unregulated cannabis market is harming our young people. Something must be done.	20
Government shareholding in Lloyds Banking Group	21
The increasing popularity of the collaborative economy	22
Widening trade deficit highlights UK's economic imbalances	23
World Press Freedom Day: fake news and how to spot it	23
Businesses across the UK hobbled by mobile 'not-spots'	24
Avian flu confirmed at a farm near Diss, South Norfolk	26
Sharp fall in EU nurses coming to UK	26
Buildings fire safety review urgently needed after Grenfell Tower fire	27
PM call with US President: 1 June 2017	27
Speed camera income across Scotland hits 3-year peak	28
Government to confirm two-year Parliament to deliver Brexit and beyond	29
Plato mission brings opportunities for UK space sector	30
Child poverty still on Welsh Government agenda	31
BCC comments on Conservative-DUP deal	31
Russia: EU prolongs economic sanctions by six months	32
Reaction to General Election result 2017	32
Tesco hit with major £8million fine for pollution incident	33
UK takes centre stage in global marine protection	34
UK and France announce joint campaign to tackle online radicalisation	35

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Cover picture: welters[®] Standing Stones



By Paul G Bazeley for
Government World

Paul's News Roundup

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

April News Review

Theresa May announced plans for a snap election to be held on the 8th June. The plans were given the go ahead with the Conservatives in the lead in the polls. May claimed that the country needs stability and certainty following the Brexit decision.

The Borussia Dortmund football club tour bus was attacked with roadside bombs. It is thought three bombs exploded

as the bus took the team to face Monaco in their quarter-final match in the Champions League. Initial thoughts suggested the bombings were terrorist-related, however, further investigation suggests this may not be the case.

Weeks after the Westminster Bridge terrorist attack a man was arrested with a backpack containing several knives close to the scene of the attack. The man had been under surveillance and

was arrested as part of an ongoing counter terrorism operation.

According to the National Grid, Britain achieved its first ever coal-free day. The announcement was seen as a milestone as energy gained using nuclear, gas, wind and solar sources were used in place of coal for a continuous 24-hour window.

Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her 91st birthday. The Queen went to Newbury Racecourse for the day which was far more subdued than her 90th birthday.

ELO, Journey, Pearl Jam, Tupac Shakur, Yes and Joan Baez were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

April Sports Review

In golf, Sergio Garcia won the Masters beating Justin Rose in a playoff. It was the first Major the Spaniard has won in an 18-year career. Always a favourite among the fans, Garcia had previously finished second four times before securing the Green Jacket at Augusta.

Serena Williams announced that she is pregnant. It was revealed that the tennis player was pregnant when she beat her sister in the Australian Open final.

May News Review

An Ariana Grande concert at Manchester Arena was targeted as a 22-year-old detonated a bomb at an exit as people were leaving the venue. Over twenty people were killed, including the attacker, and over 200 were injured. The Manchester Victoria railway station was evacuated and closed, as the

station runs partially under the arena.

Buckingham Palace announced that 95-year-old Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh will retire from duties in August. Prince Philip will be 96 when he steps down from duties and is the longest-serving royal consort in British history.

Pro-EU candidate Emmanuel Macron won the French Presidential election. The former economy minister, who said he was 'neither left nor right', beat his opposition, the far-right Marine La Pen, by winning 66% of the vote.

James Comey, the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, was dismissed by President Trump. Comey had been in

the spotlight with the Hilary Clinton email investigation and the investigation into Russian interference in the election and potential collaboration with the Trump campaign. The director was dismissed by receiving a note. The President then gave differing reasons why Comey had been dismissed. Later in the month, Trump admitted sharing classified information with Russian envoys.

Sir Roger Moore, the actor best-known for playing James Bond, died at the age of 89. Moore was also well-known for playing Simon Templar in The Saint television programme and was a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador.

Salvador Sobral of Portugal won the Eurovision Song

Contest in Kiev, Ukraine with the song 'Amar Pelos Dois'.

The Square won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes film festival. The 70th year of the festival saw the art world satire, directed by Ruben Ostlund, beat 18 other films to take the prize.

May Sports Review

Chelsea secured the Premier League title by beating West Ham 1-0.

Manchester United won the Europa league beating Ajax 2-0 in the final. The win meant that United and Jose Mourinho secured a place in the Champions League next season.

In more football news, Arsenal beat Chelsea 2-1 at Wembley to win the FA cup final. It is the third time Arsenal have won the

trophy in 4 years.

Tiger Woods was arrested for driving under the influence. The golfer claimed he had had an adverse reaction to prescribed medication. Dash cam footage appeared to show the former World No1 confused and dazed.

June News Review

London Bridge was the scene of a terrorist attack as a van ploughed into people along the pavement. The three occupants of the van, who wore fake explosive vests, then ran to Borough Market stabbing people before they were shot dead by police officers. Eight people were killed in the attack and many more were injured.

The General Election took place with the Conservatives losing 13 seats while the Labour party gained 30 seats. Although the Conservatives won the most seats, they didn't win the majority which was considered a poor result for Theresa May who had hoped to strengthen the Conservative

majority. The SNP lost 21 seats, while the Lib Dems gained four more seats.

Grenfell Tower, a 24-storey housing block in London, caught fire. The fire spread quickly with emergency services struggling to tackle the fire. It is believed the cladding led to the acceleration of the fire and has subsequently led to investigations of other housing blocks. It is unknown how many people have died in the fire and it is thought a full count will not be known until 2018.

A benefit concert named One Love Manchester took place in response to the attack at the Ariana Grande concert two weeks before. Grande herself organised and appeared at the concert which saw Take That, Coldplay, Katy Perry,

Robbie Williams, Liam Gallagher, Justin Bieber and many others perform. It reportedly made over £10million in donations.

A man was shot by police after he attacked a police officer with a hammer near Notre Dame. The man was also found to be carrying kitchen knives and reportedly had a video in his apartment where he pledged allegiance to ISIS. The attack is being investigated as an act of terrorism.

Amazon, the largest online retailer, purchased Whole Foods Market in a takeover that is believed to be significantly over £10billion. Whole Foods specialises in organic food and currently has 460 stores around the world with 9 in the UK. Amazon launched its food

delivery service 10 years ago and is now looking to strengthen its position in the grocery business.

EU mobile phone roaming charges were scrapped after an EU law came into force. The new rules mean that people can use their phone to text, call and browse the internet for the same cost as they pay at home.

David Grossman wins the Man Booker Prize for fiction for his novel A Horse Walks into a Bar. Grossman has now become the first Israeli author to win the international prize. The story is about a comedian who falls apart on stage during a gig. The author split the prize money with his translator.

June Sports Review

Real Madrid beat Juventus 4-1 in the Champions League final. The final saw Cristiano Ronaldo score two goals one of which was the 600th of his career. Real Madrid have now lifted the trophy three times in four seasons and Ronaldo has now been the top scorer in the competition for the fifth season running.

In tennis, Jelena Ostapenko beat Simona Halep 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 to win the French Open Ladies title. The next day Rafael Nadal beat Stan Wawrinka 6-2, 6-3, 6-1 to win his 10th French Open Men's title.

Brooks Koepka won the US Open at Erin Hills. The American won his first major trophy with a score of 16 under.

New Zealand won the America's Cup. The underdogs won the match 7-1 beating the previous holders USA Team Oracle to claim the trophy.

END

Wales: Free prescriptions are a long term investment in people's health – Vaughan Gething



Since 1 April 2007 prescription medicine has been provided free in Wales. All patients registered with a Welsh GP who get their prescriptions from a pharmacist in Wales are eligible.

The GP is one of a number of frontline clinical experts able to prescribe medication. Others include pharmacists and nurses: prescriptions issued by these are also free of charge.

The decision to abolish prescription charges was

taken in light of evidence that some people with serious chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure or heart disease, could not afford their prescriptions and chose to have only part of the prescription dispensed to reduce the cost.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“Free prescriptions were introduced in Wales in 2007 as a long-term investment to improve people's health.

“We were the first of the home nations to take the step to introduce free prescriptions and I'm delighted that both Scotland and Northern Ireland followed our lead.

“We firmly believe by providing people with the

medication they need helps to keep them well and out of hospital, thereby reducing the overall cost to the NHS. It should never be the case that people with serious chronic conditions can not afford to collect their prescription.

“Ensuring patients have the medication they need not only improves their own health and wellbeing, it also benefits the health service as a whole by reducing hospital attendance and placing fewer demands on general practitioners.”

“It is socially irresponsible to charge people with serious chronic conditions for the medication they need. Free prescriptions are progressive and an integral part of our health services in Wales.”

UKIP: Numbers do matter Minister

UKIP Immigration Spokesman John Bickley said, “Trusting Theresa May and the Tories to control immigration is as safe a bet as expecting a pub team from the ‘Dog & Duck’ to win the World Cup!



“As both Home Secretary and now Prime Minister Theresa May ‘promised’ to reduce immigration to the ‘tens of thousands’ - a promise and a pledge that has completely and utterly failed.

“Even the Home Office under Theresa May was concerned that many students coming into the UK, allegedly to study, would disappear off the border agency's radar and into the black economy.

“Fudging student numbers looks like a ruse to massage the immigration statistics and con the British people into believing immigration is coming down, when in fact under the Tories it's been out of control, running at over 500,000 a year.

April

Taxpayer's stake in Lloyds now below 2%

The government has continued to sell shares in Lloyds Banking Group, reducing its remaining shareholding to less than 2%.

The latest sales, conducted via the trading plan, mean the government has now recovered over £20 billion of the £20.3 billion taxpayers injected into Lloyds during the financial crisis, once share sales and dividends received are accounted for.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Simon Kirby, said:

"I welcome this further progress in returning Lloyds to the private sector. We have now recovered over £20 billion for the taxpayer and are very close to

recovering all of the money taxpayers injected into the bank during the financial crisis."

A trading plan involves gradually selling shares in the market over time, in an orderly and measured way.

The Lloyds trading plan initially ran from 17 December 2014 to 30 June 2016. The government announced on 7 October 2016 that further sales of Lloyds' shares would also be made through a trading plan.

On 9 January 2017, the government announced it had passed a significant milestone in returning Lloyds to the private sector when it confirmed it was no longer the bank's largest shareholder.

All proceeds from the sales are used to reduce the national debt.



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Green Party to investigate three day weekends

The Green Party has announced plans to investigate the possibility of a three day weekend.

In their speech to Spring Conference this weekend (Friday 31 March) Jonathan Bartley and Caroline Lucas promised to look into “radical” new policies to “redefine the relationship between work and life” and address the reality of 21st Century working practices.

Caroline Lucas said to Conference:

“We need a political movement that redistributes both money and power. One that redefines the relationship between work and life.



“One that embraces the future. Pioneering and forward facing. A future better balanced between what we own and who we are – and more focussed on what genuinely makes us happier.

“A future of radical innovation and creative disruption. That embraces a 3-day weekend, and a universal basic income.”

The party

Speaking after Conference Caroline Lucas said:

“There’s a lot of evidence that suggests that when people are exhausted their productivity goes down.

“We are now the sixth largest economy in the world. People are working ever more hours getting ever more stressed, ever more ill health and mental health problems.

“What we want to do is take a step back and think, what is the purpose of the economy? What kind of country do we want to be? And do we really want a future where all of us are trying to work even harder, taking our work home with us and working evenings and weekends.”

Disgraceful that Theresa May calls for closer UK ties with brutal Saudi Arabia

Responding to calls from Theresa May for closer ties with Saudi Arabia, UKIP’s Women’s and Equalities spokeswoman, Margot Parker MEP said:



“Whilst visiting Saudi Arabia, we call on the Prime Minister to raise the issue of horrific human rights abuse which takes place in that state every day.

“Theresa May must convey to the Saudi authorities that women are not second class citizens.

“To ignore brutal abuses on women and the flagrant discrimination against religious minorities in Saudi Arabia is to condone what is going on in this brutal regime.

New measures to unlock brownfield land for thousands of homes

Councils will have new tools to speed up development of derelict and underused land for new homes, Housing and Planning Minister Gavin Barwell confirmed.

Local authorities across the country will now have to produce and maintain up-to-date, publicly available registers of brownfield sites available for housing locally.

The new registers will help housebuilders identify suitable brownfield sites quickly, promising to unlock land for thousands of new homes.

Communities will be able to highlight local derelict or underused building sites that are primed for redevelopment. This can bring investment to the area and increase the number of new homes in the area.

As set out in the recently published Housing White Paper, the registers are part of the government's ambitious programme to speed up house building, promote brownfield sites for development and release land to deliver many more new homes.

Housing and Planning Minister Gavin Barwell said:

“We need to build more homes in this country so making sure that we re-use brownfield land is crucial. We want to bring life back to abandoned sites, create thousands more homes and help protect our valued countryside.

“These new registers will give local authorities and developers the tools to do this.”

Brownfield registers were first piloted in 2016, when

73 local planning authorities across the country pioneered the measures.

In addition, the £3 billion Home Builders Fund will be used to support the development of brownfield sites, with an additional £1.2 billion provided to unlock at least 30,000 Starter Homes on brownfield land.

Permission in principle

The government has also introduced a new way of obtaining planning permission through these new registers. It will make it easier for developers to deliver housing in the places where people want to live.

‘Permission in principle’ will simplify the planning process for developers. It will give them more certainty over whether a

site is suitable for development ahead of working up costly proposals to obtain full planning permission. This will encourage new development and increase the amount of land available to build on, helping to boost housing supply.

Further legislation will follow this year to roll-out ‘permission in principle’ more widely through the planning system.



Dangerous extremists to be separated from mainstream prison population

Dangerous extremists will be separated from the mainstream prison population and placed into specialist centres, under new rules published by Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah.

Three separation centres are being created and will form part of the wider government strategy to tackle extremism in prisons, holding up to 28 of the most subversive offenders, preventing their influence over others.

An amendment to prison rules laid before Parliament means prisoners can be placed in a separation centre if they are involved in planning terrorism or are considered to pose a risk to national security.

Those who are spreading views that might encourage or influence others to commit terrorism crimes, or anyone

whose views are being used in a way which undermines good order and security in prisons, may also be placed in one of the centres.

The first centre will be up and running at HMP Frankland in the coming weeks, with 2 further units to follow at other establishments.

Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah said:

“Any form of extremism must be defeated wherever it is found, and it is right that we separate those who pose the greatest risk in order to limit their influence over other prisoners.

“These centres are a crucial part of our wider strategy to help tackle extremism in prisons and ensure the safety and security of both our prisons and the wider public.”

A prisoner will be considered

for one of the centres if their behaviour behind bars meets one of the criteria included in the new prison rule and the level of risk they present can only be managed through separation.

Once in a centre, they will be reviewed by experts every 3 months and will only be returned to the mainstream prison population if it is considered that the risk they present has reduced to a level that can be effectively managed there.

The introduction of the centres was one of the principal recommendations of a government-commissioned independent review into extremism in prisons. The vast majority of the recommendations are being implemented.

The government takes the threat of radicalisation and

extremism in prisons extremely seriously and has built on the recommendations in the review to further boost efforts to tackle extremism.

The centres form part of the wider strategy to tackle extremism, which includes:

- The formation of a new directorate for Security, Order and Counter-Terrorism - responsible for monitoring and dealing with the evolving threat of extremism.
- A launch of a new unit that will analyse intelligence and advise prisons in England and Wales on how to deal with specific threats, as well as instruct and train prison and probation staff on how best to deter offenders from being lured into extremism.
- Extremist literature being banned from prisons and the removal of anyone from communal worship who is promoting dangerous views.
- A new training package to identify, report and combat extremism being rolled out to all prison officers and new pre-employment vetting check for chaplains and imams being introduced from February 2017.

Almost half of UK firms hit by cyber breach or attack in the past year



Firms holding personal data more likely to be attacked

Most common attacks were fraudulent emails, followed by viruses and malware

The Cyber Security Breaches Survey 2017 reveals nearly seven in ten large businesses identified a breach or attack, with the average cost to large businesses of all breaches over the period being £20,000 and in some cases reaching millions. The survey also shows businesses holding

electronic personal data on customers were much more likely to suffer cyber breaches than those that do not (51 per cent compared to 37 per cent).

The most common breaches or attacks were via fraudulent emails - for example coaxing staff into revealing passwords or financial information, or opening dangerous attachments - followed by viruses and malware, such as people impersonating the organisation online and ransomware.

Businesses also identified these common breaches as their single most disruptive breach, and the vast majority of them could have been prevented using the Government-backed,

industry supported Cyber Essentials scheme, a source of expert guidance showing how to protect against these threats.

These new statistics show businesses across the UK are being targeted by cyber criminals every day and the scale and size of the threat is growing, which risks damaging profits and customer confidence.

The Government has committed to investing £1.9 billion to protect the nation from cyber attacks to help make the UK the safest place to live and do business online.

Business also has a role to play to protect customer data. The government offers free advice, online training and Cyber Essentials and Cyber Aware schemes.



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Environment Agency takes a stand on illegal waste

Farmers, landowners, big and small business, and members of the public are being asked to be more vigilant after a number of incidents where large amounts of processed or baled waste has been dumped across the West Midlands.

Over the last 12 months the Environment Agency in the West Midlands has seen an increase of illegally dumped waste on public and private land. Fly-tipping is the responsibility of the local council however the Environment Agency becomes involved when the waste is more than 20 tonnes (about 20 cubic metres); more than 5 cubic metres of fibrous asbestos or 75 litres of potentially hazardous waste in drums or containers; or if it is linked to criminal business activity or organised crime.

What is being done to tackle waste crime

Through the Government Spending Review 2015, nationally the Environment Agency secured an additional £23m to tackle waste crime in England, up to the end of March 2020. This is being spent across the country, targeting priority areas. £20m of this is from the landfill community's tax fund. It has been used locally to fund additional temporary staff to further target illegal waste operators and high risk sites of concern.

The Environment Agency are determined to make life hard for criminals and support legitimate business, proactively supporting these businesses by disrupting, and stopping, the criminal element backed up by the threat of tough enforcement action and prosecution. The new Disruption and

Prevention team – part of the Environment Agency's National Enforcement Service - is leading the way in finding new approaches to disrupt waste crime and stop it happening. Working in partnership with law enforcement agencies, HMRC, DVLA and Companies House, as well as employing a number of techniques to track and trace vehicles and waste from different sites.

What businesses and the public can do

Everybody has a part to play to help solve the waste crime problem and make sure waste is managed responsibly. The Environment Agency is asking members of the public to be vigilant; to contact them with information on anything suspicious as long as it is safe for people to do so. Dumping commercial waste like this is a crime. Individuals involved in such illegal activity can be hostile and we would urge members of the public to not

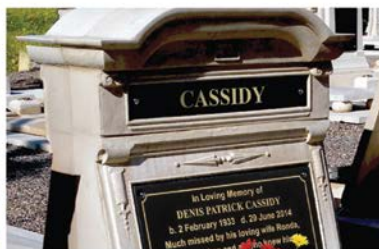
put themselves in any danger if they encounter any such activity and to avoid any direct contact with the culprits.

Lisa Pinney, Environment Agency Area Manager for West Midlands, said:

“It's crucial that all businesses understand their duty of care responsibilities for the waste they produce, who they allow to transport it and ultimately where it goes. Too often, when these responsibilities are misunderstood or ignored, we see the impact of waste crime where waste is deliberately dumped on land with no permit. This can cause serious pollution, put communities at risk and undermines legitimate businesses that are doing the right thing. And even if the landowner has no involvement, legally they may still be responsible for that waste and that could mean a large clear up bill.

“Waste stored inappropriately can create issues for neighbours through smells and pests. It can also have a detrimental effect on the environment and impact on rivers and streams. If you see or suspect illegal waste activities, report it anonymously to Crimestoppers online or by calling 0800 555 111. Alternatively report it to the Environment Agency's incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.”

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Roman treasures found on A1

Roman objects discovered through a Highways England major road improvement scheme shed light on Roman life in North Yorkshire.

Archaeologists have uncovered Roman shoes and keys, a rare amber figurine and the most northerly example of coin production as part of Highways England's £380 million Highways England Leeming to Barton scheme.

These finds are shedding new light on Roman life in Northern England. They hint at a far more sophisticated industrial and administrative centre in Yorkshire than had previously been known

about. They also point to wealthy citizens having lived in the area. Neil Redfern, Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments at Historic England said:

"The sheer amount of exceptional objects found on this road scheme has been extraordinary. Through them we are learning more and more about life here in the Roman period. This project has given us a unique opportunity to understand how the Romans conducted their military expansion into Northern England and how civil life changed under their control.

"We discovered these treasures as part of our

work to upgrade the existing dual carriageway between Leeming and Barton with a new 3 lane motorway."

The upgrade is part of the government's £15 billion investment in motorways and strategic A roads.

Nearly 2,000 years ago the Romans used the very latest technological

innovations to construct the original A1 as a major road of strategic importance – just as Highways England is doing today.



The extensive excavations have been carried out by Northern Archaeological Associates, on the advice of Historic England's experts.

New water choice for English businesses

The world's biggest competitive water market officially opened on April 1st, which for the first time gives more than 1.2 million businesses, charities and public sector bodies the chance to choose their water provider wherever they are in the country.

Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom welcomed the launch of the market, which will deliver up to £200 million of benefits to the economy and water customers over the next 30 years, through improved service and better value for money.

By opening the market, companies ranging from businesses with very few employees to multinationals, as well as charities and public sector organisations, will be able to shop around for the best deal from all water utilities in England.

Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

“Over a million businesses, charities and public sector organisations will now be able to find the water deal that works best for them. Opening the market is an historic milestone, paving the way for innovation and efficiency and giving customers the same choice over their water retailer as they currently have for their energy and other essential services.”

Defra has worked with partners Ofwat, which will regulate the new market, and Market Operator Services Ltd (MOSL), which will operate the market on behalf of its water company members, to ensure there is a smooth transition for customers.

Ofwat Chief Executive Cathryn Ross said:

“Business customers have been crying out for choice over their provider of water and waste water services for years. From now businesses, charities and public sector organisations in England will

be able to choose their retailer to get a better deal.

“The opening of the business retail market takes us into new territory. It is the single biggest change to the water sector since privatisation and I am hugely optimistic about the changes that lay ahead and the benefits they will bring to customers.

“But it is important that we at Ofwat maintain effective oversight of how the new market is working and what customers are experiencing. This will mean that we can step in if we need to, to make sure customers are protected.”

MOSL Chief Executive Ben Jeffs said:

“This launch marks the successful delivery of the largest and most complicated transformation programmes undertaken by the water sector since privatisation. Delivering a programme of this scale and complexity

has involved a huge team effort across Government, Ofwat and the entire industry.

“Competition not only offers non-household customers the prospect of a better price for a better service, it will create new opportunities and challenges for the sector as a whole. The level of engagement we have had to date has been exemplary and, as the market operator, we look forward to working with companies to ensure the new market delivers on its promise to customers.”

The new market in England now becomes the biggest of its kind in the world and Defra will continue to support the water sector as the market develops.

Scotland is the only other country with a competitive water market for businesses and this government has been working closely with its Scottish partners in the lead-up to the opening to draw from their learnings and expertise.

Businesses, charities or public sector organisations interested in changing their water retailer should shop around. There is more information available about available water retail suppliers on the Open Water website.

Rare Meissen figure at risk of leaving the UK

The Commedia dell'arte figure is at risk of being exported from the UK unless a buyer can be found to match the asking price of £270,000.

Meissen is renowned across Europe as being the first true hard-paste porcelain factory in 18th century Europe. The rare, fragile and translucent porcelain imported from China and Japan was a source of wonder to kings, princes and aristocrats across Europe at the time, with many attempting to replicate these efforts. The production of hard-paste porcelain was preceded by the creation of a very fine high-fired earthenware.

This stoneware figure is an outstanding example, which demonstrates the cutting-edge technology of the time.

It is one of an extremely rare group of models after the Italian Commedia dell'arte theatre, for which the factory at Meissen subsequently became famous.

The item was formerly owned by Emma Budge, a prominent Jewish art collector whose collection was sold at the Graupe Auction House in Berlin in 1937 following her death. The Nazis replaced the executors of her will with their own and the proceeds from the sale were paid into a blocked account. Emma's heirs never received any of the money. The figure was eventually acquired by a prominent member of the Jewish community who escaped Nazi Germany in April 1938.

The decision to defer the export licence follows a recommendation by the

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest (RCEWA), administered by The Arts Council England.

The RCEWA made its recommendation on the grounds of the figure's aesthetic importance and for its outstanding significance to the study of Meissen porcelain and 18th century sculpture.

The decision on the export licence application for the figure will be deferred until 1 October. This may be extended until 1 January 2018 if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase it is made at the recommended price of £270,000 (plus VAT of £4,500).

Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the figure should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.



Calls for investigation into SNP Government announcement

The Scottish Conservatives have called on the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government to investigate a Scottish Government announcement of an £8 million investment for Glasgow just two days before the local council election.

Official guidance states that Civil Servants in the Scottish Government should take ‘particular care’ over ‘official support, and the use of public resources, including publicity, for Ministerial or official announcements which could have a bearing on matters relevant to the local elections. In some cases, it might be better to defer an

announcement until after the elections’.

It says “particular care” should be taken in the three week period before the elections.

The Scottish Government announced £8.35million of funding for redevelopment in Glasgow – a key SNP target area in the local authority elections – late on Tuesday.

Ross Thomson, the party’s General Election candidate in Aberdeen South, questioned the motives behind the announcement.

He has written to Leslie Evans, Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government, requesting

an investigation into the propriety of the timing.

Scottish Conservative candidate for Aberdeen South, Ross Thomson said:

“This looks like a blatant attempt to sway voters in an area that is being targeted by the SNP.

“I have written to the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government asking for an explanation as to how this could be announced just 48 hours before voters go to the polls.

“People need to have absolute confidence that public money is not being used for party political ends.”

Happy retirement Prince Philip

Responding to the news of Prince Philip’s retirement from public service UKIP Leader Paul Nuttall MEP said, “Today we should honour the life of service to our Queen and nation by Prince Philip.

“For over 60 years he has been a dedicated public servant, and deserves our great thanks. Happy retirement Sir.”

UKIP Deputy Leader Peter Whittle AM added, “Prince Philip has been the very model of public duty at its best and utterly steadfast in his support of the Queen.

“We in UKIP offer him our very best wishes for well earned rest from public life.”

SNP literacy figures are “an absolute disgrace” - Gray



Scottish Labour Education spokesperson Iain Gray MSP

and they are an absolute disgrace. Standards in both reading and writing have fallen since 2012 and the gap between the richest pupils and the rest has not closed.

No child should have their life chances determined by their background – yet that is exactly what is happening under a Nationalist government obsessed with the constitution.

For John Swinney to suggest that the answer is centralising school budgets is ridiculous. The answer is to stop the SNP’s cuts to schools.

The SNP has starved our schools of £1 billion

in recent years, and a generation of children has paid the price.

There are 4,000 fewer teachers, 1,000 fewer school support staff and 700 teacher vacancies that will take three years to fill under the SNP.

Class sizes are among the biggest in the developed world.

Labour is the only party standing up against SNP cuts that put the life chances of our young people at risk.

A vote for Labour on June 8 will tell Nicola Sturgeon to get on with the job of running our schools – and to stop trying to divide us with an unwanted second independence referendum.

EU agencies celebrate EuropeDay together

Europe Day, held on 9 May every year, marks the anniversary of the historical ‘Schuman declaration’ and celebrates peace and unity in Europe.

Every year in May, the European Union institutions and agencies in Europe, as well as its offices all over the world, organise a variety of activities for all ages to mark the day and raise awareness about the EU.

EU agencies celebrate EuropeDay together. Here’s to the next 60 years breaking barriers and working for a stronger EU!



Green Party slams UKIP aid proposal



Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader. Photo by Jwslubbock: Wikipedia

The Green Party has condemned UKIP's proposal to cut aid spending from 0.7% of national income to 0.2% [1]. The Green Party is opposed to any cuts to the foreign aid budget and believes it should be increased to 1%.

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“Cutting the aid budget will cost lives. Any move to rollback our commitment to international development would be a dereliction of this country's duty to the rest of the world.

“UKIP's little-Englander approach has no place in a global, interconnected world. We should be increasing our aid budget, not slashing it by billions of pounds. There's nothing anti-establishment about scrapping help for those in need.

“Our foreign aid spending is crucial to help stamp out inequalities around

the world. A solution that simply creates another problem elsewhere is no solution at all.

“We know that aid alone isn't enough, and that it must come alongside fairer trading rules, but it is the bedrock of a credible foreign policy where Britain can play a positive role in world affairs. In the coming weeks the Green Party will put forward a bold plan to step up Britain's global commitments on aid, climate change and nuclear disarmament.”



Ryanair Brexit warning shows risk of “no deal” for UK travellers

They also warned that Theresa May's plans to leave the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice would mean Britain will leave the Open Skies agreement which governs flights between the UK and Europe.

Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron said:

“This is the reality of Theresa May's extreme version of Brexit and insistence we could just crash out of the EU without a deal.

“Jobs could be lost, flights disrupted and British travellers' lives thrown into chaos, but Theresa May doesn't care.

“We will fight for a better deal on Europe and to give people a chance to reject a disastrous Brexit.

“The British people should be able to decide whether Theresa May's Brexit deal is right for them, with the choice to remain in the EU if they don't like what's on offer.”

May

The unregulated cannabis market is harming our young people. Something must be done.

The Liberal Democrats plan to break the grip of criminal gangs and protect young people by introducing a legal, regulated market for cannabis.

Why are we doing this?

Because the current approach to cannabis has been a catastrophic failure.

Unregulated cannabis is freely available and widely used, generating significant mental and psychological health problems – especially for young people – who are being harmed by increasingly potent products.

Because organised criminals are making huge profits at the expense

of people's health, in an illegal industry with no age checks, and no controls on quality or strength. The UK cannabis economy is worth an estimated £7bn a year. We could put that money to better use.

Every British government so far has passed the buck of responsibility for this problem, thereby giving total control to the illegal rings who benefit from it. This is irresponsible and dangerous.

It's time for an honest and pragmatic response. Only the Lib Dems can do this.

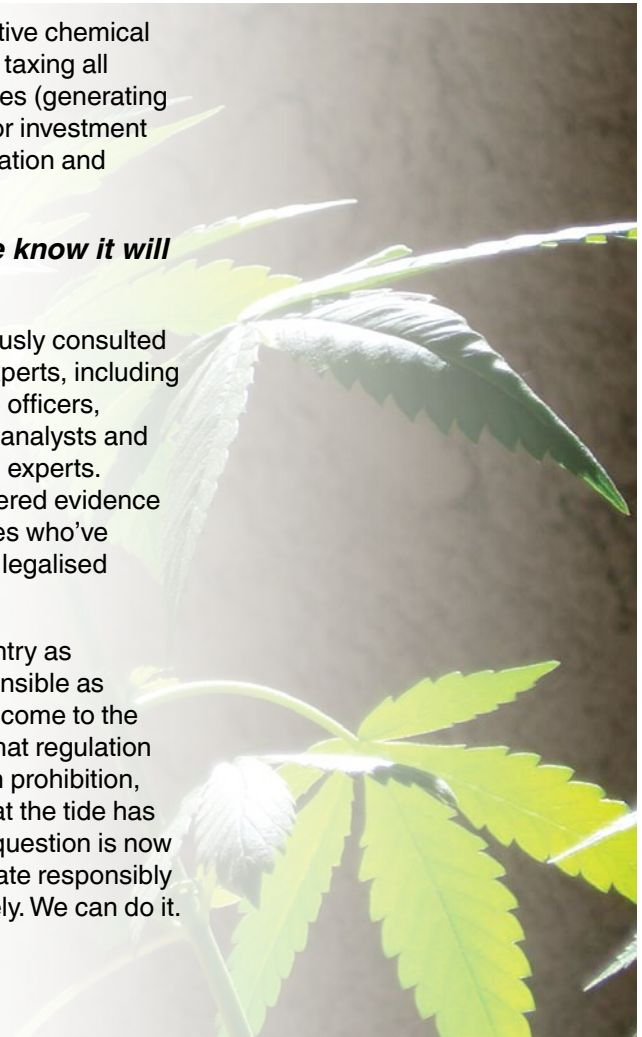
We propose a series of strict regulations, such as limiting sales of cannabis to over-18s, making cannabis safer by limiting

its psychoactive chemical content, and taxing all cannabis sales (generating up to £1bn for investment in drug education and treatment).

How do we know it will work?

We've rigorously consulted a panel of experts, including senior police officers, drugs policy analysts and public health experts. They considered evidence from countries who've successfully legalised cannabis.

When a country as eminently sensible as Canada has come to the conclusion that regulation is better than prohibition, you know that the tide has turned. The question is now how to regulate responsibly and effectively. We can do it.



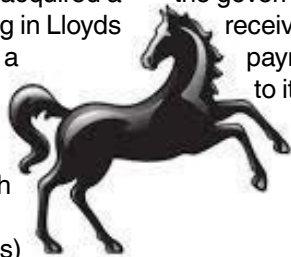
May

Government shareholding in Lloyds Banking Group

Lloyds Banking Group has been fully returned to private ownership.

The trading plan announced in October 2016 has ended following the final sale of the government's shares in Lloyds Banking Group (Lloyds). As a result, Lloyds have informed the market this morning (17 May 2017) that the government is no longer a shareholder in the bank.

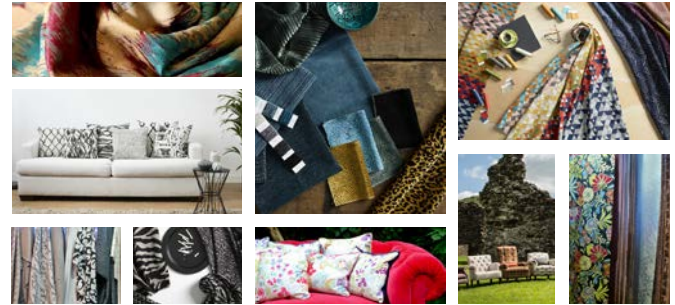
The government acquired a 43% shareholding in Lloyds in 2009 following a £20.3 billion intervention in the bank. Shares were sold through accelerated bookbuilds (ABBs)



LLOYDS BANK

in September 2013 and March 2014. ABBs involve selling a large block of shares to institutional investors overnight.

Additional shares were sold through two trading plans which ran from December 2014 to June 2016, and from October 2016 to May 2017. A trading plan involves drip-feeding shares into the market on a daily basis, over an extended period of time. In addition, the government has also received dividend payments in relation to its shareholding.



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For information visit www.londonfabricshow.uk or contact Mike Dimond by email: mikedimond@bfm.org.uk

www.londonfabricshow.uk

May

The increasing popularity of the collaborative economy



Online platforms such as Uber, Airbnb and Deliveroo that match providers of goods and services with consumers have become household names in just a few years. The total transactions' value for the four main sectors involved in the so-called collaborative economy already reached €28 billion in the EU in

2015, nearly double that of 2014. However, this new business model also comes with challenges and opportunities, which are dealt with in a report adopted by the internal market committee on 3 May.

How the collaborative economy works

Each transaction usually

involves three parties: the consumer paying for the service, the provider who gets the income and the platform, which matches the two together and takes a fixed commission on the payment.

One of the core ideas is to unlock the value of unused or under-used assets. This could for example be an empty room in an apartment, which could be rented out to visitors. Usually no change of ownership is involved.

Not all collaborative platforms are geared towards generating a profit. Some use alternative, non-monetary currencies such as time or favours, others simply rely on voluntary contribution of their users.

One of the best examples is the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia which since launching in 2001 has become the largest encyclopaedia in existence with nearly 5.4 million articles in English.

Collaborative platforms can also be an effective tool for bringing local communities together in the pursuit of common goals.

Challenges

The success of collaborative platforms has raised concerns regarding workers' rights and unfair advantages these firms might enjoy over traditional companies that are bound by stricter legal regulations. Read more about the controversies surrounding the collaborative economy in our in-depth background article.

Fair working conditions and adequate protection should be guaranteed for all workers in the collaborative economy, according to the report adopted by the internal market committee on 3 May.

May

Widening trade deficit highlights UK's economic imbalances

Commenting on the trade statistics for March 2017, released by the ONS, Suren Thiru, Head of Economics at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

“The sharp deterioration in the UK's net trade position means that trade is likely to have been a drag on UK growth in the first quarter of the year, following a strong performance in the previous quarter. This deterioration reflects a sharp rise in imports in the quarter, and a slight fall in exports.

“While many exporters are benefiting from improving growth outlooks in key trading markets, and the weaker pound is helping to make them more price competitive, our Quarterly

Economic Survey shows businesses under pressure from the rising costs of raw materials. The widening in the UK's trade deficit, and weakening output from the industrial and construction sectors, is further evidence that we are still a long way from achieving a rebalancing of our economy.

“As the UK moves through the Brexit process and beyond, it is vital that more is done to provide greater practical assistance for exporters, including developing an expanded trade mission and fairs programme and funding front-line, face-to-face support for exporters to help get UK businesses trading with the world.”

World Press Freedom Day: fake news and how to spot it

World Press Freedom Day is marked every year on 3 May, but there is little reason to celebrate as journalists continue to be repressed and persecuted all over the world. The challenges facing the press are discussed by Parliament's human rights subcommittee on Thursday morning, with a special focus on the growing threat of disinformation.

The internet has created new opportunities for the media, but it has also made it easier to deliberately spread fabricated news stories to fool readers. Parliament President Antonio Tajani called attention to the issue in a statement: “When we consider press freedom,

we also have to look at the internet. It is a source of knowledge as much as it is a source of concern. Almost half of all Europeans get their news from social media. This has made spreading fake news far too easy. There are mounting concerns over disinformation and hate speech, used to promote radicalisation and fundamentalism, particularly among young people.”

During the debate on 4 May, members of the human rights subcommittee are to discuss the World Press Freedom index compiled by Reporters without Borders as well the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) activities in the field of media freedom and how the EU is reacting to disinformation and fake news.

Businesses across the UK hobbled by mobile ‘not-spots’

The BCC has released the results of its digital survey on mobile connectivity.

Businesses in all parts of the UK, particularly rural areas, are experiencing full or partial ‘not-spots’ in their mobile coverage according to the results of a survey released by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC).

The survey of over 1,400 businesses, found that 70% of firms experience mobile ‘non-spots’, areas of no mobile coverage by any operator, or ‘partial not-spots’, where there is some coverage but not from all networks, in their local area.

The findings show the proportion of companies based in rural areas which report such issues (91%) is considerably higher than those in inner cities (56%).

The results also show that

29% of businesses have unreliable mobile internet connections, with the figure rising to 54% in rural areas.

The survey found that a considerable proportion of UK businesses are not accessing the highest connection speed, with only 42% of businesses reporting a 4G connection.

Other key findings of the survey are:

- 6% of companies still typically obtain a 2G connection and 25% a 3G connection
- Inner city firms (54%) are more likely to have 4G than those based in rural areas (25%)
- Big businesses are more likely to report 4G connections (57% of businesses with more than 500 employees) than their smaller counterparts (41% with 1-4 employees)

Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce, said:

“All across the country businesspeople complain about patchy mobile coverage and unreliable internet connections in their local areas. Time and again, I hear from frustrated businesspeople who can’t use their mobiles or access the internet when they need to – basic requirements for companies to work on the move, trade online, and connect with customers and suppliers.

“Rural businesses are particularly affected by poor mobile coverage and connectivity, but our research shows that ‘not-spots’ are prevalent across the UK. It’s incredible to hear that in this day and age there are even places in the City of London

where businesses can’t get reliable coverage.

“Some of the solutions are obvious. Relaxing planning laws to allow for taller masts would be a quick win for the next government to help improve mobile coverage.

“As the regulator, Ofcom must do more to hold providers to account for the services advertised to business customers, and put in place remedies that are as strong for business users as they are for individual consumers. According to their rules, virtually all UK premises must receive 4G signal by the end of the year, but the results of our research suggest that we’re a long way off achieving that target.

“It’s clear that the UK is lagging in the delivery of access to a world-class digital infrastructure. While there have been welcome announcements to roll out 5G in the future, it’s clear that getting all businesses access to 4G first remains a top priority. The Chamber Network’s election manifesto specifically calls for these issues to be rectified, and for the next government to provide all businesses with super-fast and reliable broadband and mobile connectivity to boost confidence and productivity.”

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Avian flu confirmed at a farm near Diss, South Norfolk

H5N8 avian flu has been confirmed in a small flock of chickens and geese at a premises near Diss, South Norfolk.

The UK's Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer has confirmed H5N8 avian flu in a small flock of chickens and geese at a premises near Diss, South Norfolk. A 3 km Protection Zone and a 10 km Surveillance Zone have been put in place around the infected premises to limit the risk of the disease spreading.

The flock is estimated to contain approximately 35 birds. A number have died and the remaining live birds at the premises are being humanely culled. A full investigation is under way to determine the source of the infection.

Public Health England

advises that the risk to public health from the virus is very low and the Food Standards Agency is clear that bird flu does not pose a food safety risk for UK consumers.

Keepers are urged to continue to be vigilant and look out for the signs of avian flu in their flocks, informing the Animal and Plant Health Agency should they suspect infection.



File photo by Ronald Duncan
Source: Wikipedia

Sharp fall in EU nurses coming to UK



There has been a sharp fall in nurses from EU countries registering to work in the NHS, new figures have revealed.

The Health Service Journal reports that monthly statistics show the number of EU nurses registering with the NMC to work in the UK peaked at 1,304 in July 2016, a month after the referendum, before falling to 344 in September 2016 and then to just 46 in April 2017.

Liberal Democrat Shadow

Health Secretary Norman Lamb said: "These figures are profoundly worrying and the possible implications for the NHS and patients cannot be underestimated. The government has to face up to the impact their refusal to guarantee EU citizens to remain in the UK after Brexit is having. It is a political choice they have made and it is going to harm our services, in particular the NHS.

"The government must now change this decision. The result of the election last week gives them the opportunity to change their mind, and they now must. Liberal Democrats are clear that EU citizens whose lives are now rooted in the UK must have the right to stay".

Buildings fire safety review urgently needed after Grenfell Tower fire



The Liberal Democrats have called on the government to urgently publish a long-awaited review of building regulations on fire safety and implement its recommendations, following the deadly fire at Grenfell Tower.

Sal Brinton, Liberal Democrat Party President and member of the All-Party Parliamentary Fire Safety and Rescue

Group, commented:

“My heart goes out to the victims of this tragedy, their family and friends and the emergency services who have shown such bravery in appalling circumstances.

“It is too soon to say the exact causes of this deadly fire, but we must not shy away from asking difficult questions.

“In particular, we need to look at why the lessons

of the past seem not to have been learnt.

“Ministers have been asked repeatedly to upgrade fire safety regulations but have done nothing, including on sprinklers and strengthening compliance rules.

“The government must conduct an urgent review into fire safety and building regulations, with recommendations implemented as soon as possible.

“We must also hold a public inquiry into what caused this tragic fire and how it could have been prevented.”

PM call with US President: 1 June 2017

A Downing Street Spokesperson said:

“President Trump called the Prime Minister to discuss his decision to pull the US out of the Paris Agreement.

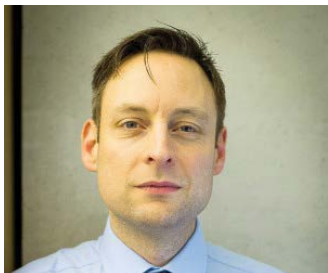
“The Prime Minister expressed her disappointment with the decision and stressed that the UK remained committed to the Paris Agreement, as she set out recently at the G7.

“She said that the Paris Agreement provides the right global framework for protecting the prosperity and security of future generations, while keeping energy affordable and secure for our citizens and businesses.

“The President made clear that the door remains open to future US involvement in the Agreement.

“The Prime Minister and President agreed on the importance of continued cooperation on wider energy issues.”

Speed camera income across Scotland hits 3-year peak



Cameras in Tayside, Central and Fife produced the most money – raking in £1.3 million – followed by Grampian and the Highlands and Islands, which generated £1.2 million.

Across Scotland there are more than 200 fixed speed cameras. The statistics show they bring in £14,000 a day.

The Scottish Conservatives said while speed cameras had a role to play in improving safety, it was important they weren't merely seen as cash cows.

Scottish Conservative transport spokesman Liam Kerr said:

“Motorists completely accept speed cameras have a place on Scotland’s roads to ensure safe driving.

“But there is a widespread suspicion that these are

set up not to reduce speed, but to generate money from those edging over the various speed limits they police.

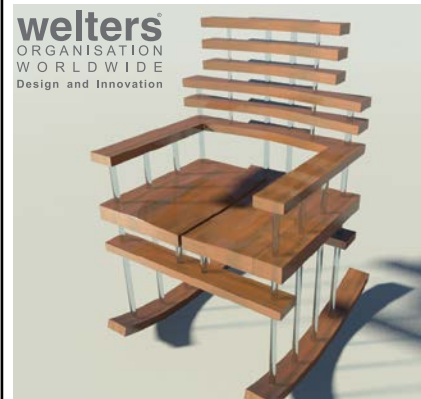
“The fact that an ever-increasing amount of money is being generated from motorists for whom driving is becoming ever more expensive, will only reinforce this view that they are first and foremost simply being used as revenue-generators.

“Speed cameras should be situated where their presence has a demonstrable positive impact on road safety and accident prevention.

“Too many seem to be placed in areas such as the first clear straight on an A-road, ensuring that those carrying out an appropriate, safety conscious, overtaking manoeuvre but exceeding the speed limit are caught out.”

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Government to confirm two-year Parliament to deliver Brexit and beyond



- *Rare two-year Parliamentary session to give MPs the time to consider crucial legislation*
- *Double the length of a normal Parliamentary session*
- *Great Repeal Bill to be considered alongside other Brexit legislation and government's domestic agenda*

Parliament will sit for two years instead of the usual one to give MPs enough time to fully consider the laws required to make Britain ready for Brexit. This includes the Great Repeal Bill, which by converting existing EU law into UK statute will enable the smoothest possible transition at the point of leaving.

The government will

deliver this while also addressing deep-rooted inequalities in our society in order to give everyone the opportunities they deserve. Taken together, the EU exit process and the government's domestic agenda mean the new Parliament faces a substantial legislative programme.

By doubling the length of the session the government is providing the space for MPs and peers to scrutinise and debate the government's approach to both Brexit and its domestic agenda without interruption. Next week the government will confirm the legislation required to deliver Brexit, including new laws on immigration, as set out in the government's white paper on Brexit earlier this year.

Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP, Leader of the House of

Commons, said:

"Whilst our top priority right now is supporting the victims of the terrible tragedy at Grenfell tower, we also need to look ahead by setting out a legislative programme that not only delivers a successful EU exit but also a domestic agenda which aims to tackle the social injustices in our country.

"The UK will spend the next two years preparing for our departure from the European Union in a way that best places us to realise the opportunities ahead and build a fairer society.

"This will require substantial amounts of legislation, beginning with the Great Repeal Bill.

"We will build the broadest possible consensus for our Brexit plans and that means giving Parliament the maximum amount of time to scrutinise these bills by holding a two-year session of Parliament. It will mean we can work together to deliver a successful Brexit deal and a strong social legislative programme that delivers justice and opportunity to everyone."

Plato mission brings opportunities for UK space sector



Searching for exoplanetary systems. Credit: ESA.

Plato (Planetary Transits and Oscillations of stars) was adopted at the European Space Agency's Science Programme Committee meeting, following its selection in February 2014. That means work to build the science instrument payload can begin and in the coming months industry will be invited to bid to ESA for the contract to supply the spacecraft.

The UK Space Agency is investing £25 million in the development of the novel scientific instruments on board.

Dr Katherine Wright, Head

of Space Science at the UK Space Agency, said:

“Investment in Plato builds on UK science and engineering strengths in this area and secures us a leading role on this pre-eminent space science mission for the next decade. Plato has the exciting potential to discover Earth-like planets around other stars, which may eventually lead to the detection of extra-terrestrial life.”

Planned to launch in 2026, Plato will monitor thousands of relatively bright stars over a large area of the sky, searching

for tiny, regular dips in brightness as their planets cross in front of them, temporarily blocking out a small fraction of the starlight.

Astronomers have so far found over 1,000 planets beyond our Solar System (exoplanets), but none as yet has been shown to be truly Earth-like in terms of its size and distance from a Sun similar to our own.

Plato's innovative design is set to change all that. Its suite of multiple small telescopes and cameras, reminiscent of the compound eye of an insect, will allow it to 'stare' at a large number of the nearest and brightest stars, with the aim of discovering Earth-sized planets orbiting Sun-like stars in the 'habitable zone' – the distance from the star where liquid water could exist at the surface.

This will allow them to be studied with unprecedented accuracy

and assessed for their potential to host life. An important part of this investigation will be to perform an intricate study of the structure and properties of the host stars themselves, providing key complementary information needed for the proper characterisation of rocky Earth-like exoplanet worlds.

UK scientists and engineers in collaboration with the UK Space Agency are leading participants involved in all aspects of the mission. Prof Don Pollacco, of Warwick University, leads the Plato Science Management Consortium. Scientists and engineers at UCL's Mullard Space Science Laboratory are responsible for the design and manufacture of the electronics for the camera system that sits behind the telescopes, and for characterising the camera detectors to optimise their performance.

The detectors are charge-coupled devices (CCDs), produced by the e2v company in Chelmsford under contract to ESA. A team of UK scientists, coordinated by Cambridge's Institute of Astronomy, is also developing the Exoplanet Analysis data processing system on the ground.

Child poverty still on Welsh Government agenda



This approach has seen increasing investment in initiatives which are key to preventing and reducing poverty, delivering a more equal and prosperous Wales.

While recognising that more needed to be done the Cabinet Secretary said the Welsh Government is making progress towards achieving its child poverty objectives in a number of areas.

Carl Sargeant said:

“Employment in Wales is close to a record high and the number of children living in workless households is at an all time low. We have reduced the gap in educational attainment between pupils eligible

for Free School Meals and those who are not, exceeding our target for pupils achieving the expected level at Foundation Phase.”

The Cabinet Secretary said early childhood experiences are important for a child’s long-term development and their achievements in later life which is why a focus on early intervention and prevention is important, particularly in respect of Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Carl Sargeant added:

“Tackling poverty is the responsibility of every Cabinet Secretary and every Minister. While we do not underestimate the scale of our challenge, we must also recognise the opportunities available.”

Addressing Children in Wales’s Child Poverty Conference, the Cabinet Secretary reaffirmed the Welsh Government’s commitment to eradicating child poverty.

He said the focus on employability, early years and empowerment has put far greater emphasis on those areas which support children to have the best start in life.

BCC comments on Conservative-DUP deal



Commenting on the confidence and supply deal announced by the Conservatives and DUP, Dr

Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

“Since the General Election, the top priority for business communities across the UK has been a workable government that can do more than just tackle Brexit negotiations. Action is needed, now, to improve the environment for business and industry here at home. For business, action on the economy will be the true test of the success of the Conservative-DUP deal over the coming months”

Russia: EU prolongs economic sanctions by six months



On 28 June 2017, the Council prolonged economic sanctions targeting specific sectors of the Russian economy until 31 January 2018.

This decision follows an update from President Macron and Chancellor Merkel to the European Council of 22-23 June 2017 on the implementation of the Minsk Agreements. This paved the way for the renewal of sanctions for a further six months.

The Council formalised this decision by written procedure and, in line with the rule for all such

decisions, unanimously.

The measures were originally introduced on 31 July 2014 for one year in response to Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine. They were strengthened in September 2014. They target the financial, energy and defence sectors, and the area of dual-use goods.

On 19 March 2015, the European Council agreed to link the duration of the sanctions to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements, which was foreseen to take place by 31 December 2015. Since this did not happen, and given that the Minsk agreements have still not been fully implemented, the Council has extended the sanctions.



Reaction to General Election result 2017

Commenting on the General Election result, Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

“After two long years of elections, referenda and wider uncertainty, many businesses were doing their best to ignore the noise of politics – up until now.

“The electorate’s split decision generates further uncertainty for business communities, who are already grappling with currency fluctuations, rising costs, and the potential impacts of Brexit.

“The formation of a workable administration that can give

voters and businesses confidence around economic management must be the immediate priority.

“Whilst companies have for many months done their best to screen out political noise in order to focus on their own operations, this result will prove much harder for UK businesses to ignore. The swift formation of a functioning government is essential to business confidence and our wider economic prospects.

“Businesses are adept at forming alliances and coalitions when important interests are at stake. We should expect the same of our politicians.”

On the timetable for Brexit negotiations, which are scheduled to begin in less than a fortnight, Dr Marshall said:

“No business would walk into a negotiation without clear objectives, an agreed starting position, and a strong negotiating team. It is hard to see how Brexit negotiations could begin without answers on these important questions.”

Tesco hit with major £8million fine for pollution incident



Tesco Stores Ltd has been ordered to pay over £8million in fines and costs after pleading guilty to a pollution incident.

The incident, which occurred in July 2014, sparked a huge multi-agency operation involving the Environment Agency, Lancashire County Council, United Utilities, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and Lancashire Police.

It had a massive impact on the local community and environment with residents having to leave their homes due to petrol odours coming from the sewer network.

The Environment Agency's joint investigation with

partners found that the incident resulted from Tesco's failure to address a known issue with part of the fuel delivery system and an inadequate alarm system and was compounded by poor emergency procedures.

Tesco were fined a total of £8million - £5million for the health and safety offence and £3million for the environmental offence.

Between Wednesday 2 July and Thursday 3 July 2014 approximately 23,500 litres of petrol escaped from a petrol filling tank at a petrol station in Haslingden operated by Tesco.

Petrol entered the sewerage system with the odours affecting residents up to 1km away causing people to seek medical attention with headaches

and sickness. The odours remained in the homes for a number of days.

Some of the petrol also entered Langwood Brook and the River Irwell causing a significant environmental impact killing fish and other aquatic life.

Samples taken from the River Irwell detected oil up to three miles downstream. Over 40 dead fish, including brown trout, were found within 1.5 miles of where the pollution entered. Anglers reported dead fish in Bury, over six miles downstream.

About 23,500 litres of unleaded petrol leaked from the tank over a 29 hour period. Around 7,000 litres was later recovered at the site and the remainder escaped into the sewer system and watercourse.

Mark Easedale, an Environment Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

"This pollution incident had a dramatically negative impact on the local community and the environment with Langwood Brook and the River Irwell severely affected. A week after the pollution incident an investigation by Environment Agency officers found fish populations in the River Irwell immediately downstream of Langwood Brook were around 90% lower than those found upstream.

"The sentencing sends out a clear message to anyone whose recklessness causes serious pollution to the environment – we will be relentless in our investigations and take action wherever needed.

"Our staff work 24/7 to protect people and wildlife from pollution incidents and we encourage people to report such incidents to the Environment Agency's Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60."

This was a joint prosecution with Lancashire County Council and Tesco Stores Ltd also pleaded guilty to an offence under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

UK takes centre stage in global marine protection



Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey has set out how the UK continues to play a leading role in protecting the world's oceans and turning the tide on marine litter.

Speaking in Cork for the 25th annual meeting of the OSPAR Commission – an international convention to protect the marine environment of the north-east Atlantic – the Minister outlined how the UK is leading international efforts to tackle plastic pollution, protect marine species and habitats, and support cutting-edge marine science.

Earlier this month the UK made a number of voluntary commitments at the first-ever United Nations Ocean Conference in New York. These include joining the UN's Clean Seas campaign to reduce the use of disposable plastic by 2022, strengthening global ocean observations, and working with Overseas Territories to protect the diverse range of marine life in their waters.

Speaking at the meeting, Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

“The UK continues to be a

global leader in protecting beaches, oceans and marine life around the world.

“Our seas are critical to the future of our planet – they supply the oxygen we breathe, absorb the carbon dioxide we produce, and provide us with a magnificent array of marine species and habitats. That's why we must act now to protect them for future generations.

“The introduction of the 5p plastic bag charge was a great step forward – cutting the number of bags found on beaches by nearly half – and alongside our work to ban harmful microbeads, reduce plastic packaging, and create a series of marine protected areas, I am determined for us to remain a heavy-hitter on the marine world stage.”

The meeting of the OSPAR Commission, jointly co-hosted by the Environment Minister and Ireland's Minister of State for Housing and Urban Renewal, Damien English, brings together 15 countries across Europe to set out ongoing work to create a network of marine protected areas and launch a new report on the status of marine species and habitats in the north-east Atlantic.

Through OSPAR, the UK and neighbouring countries have developed and are implementing a Regional Action Plan on marine litter. This covers 55 actions to address land-based and sea-based sources of litter, including education and awareness activities, marine monitoring, and removing litter that has already reached the marine environment.

At the UN Ocean Conference, the UK reiterated its continued commitment to conserving and sustainably using the world's seas – one of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to tackle poverty, end hunger and protect the environment.

June

UK and France announce joint campaign to tackle online radicalisation



The UK and France have joined forces to tackle online radicalisation with plans that could lead to much stronger action against tech companies who fail to remove unacceptable content.

Ahead of the Prime Minister's visit to Paris,

where she will hold talks on counter-terrorism with French President Emmanuel Macron, the UK and France have announced a new joint campaign to ensure that the internet cannot be used as a safe space for terrorists and criminals.

Crucially, plans include

exploring the possibility of creating a new legal liability for tech companies if they fail to remove content. This could, for example, include penalties such as fines for companies that fail to take action. The two countries will lead joint work with the tech companies on this vital agenda, including working with them to develop tools to identify and remove harmful material automatically.

In particular, the Prime Minister and President Macron will press relevant firms to urgently establish the industry-led forum agreed at the G7 summit last month, to develop shared technical and policy solutions to tackle terrorist content on the internet.

The Home Secretary and the French Interior Minister will meet in the coming days

to drive forward this important work.

Speaking ahead of her visit to Paris, the Prime Minister said:

“The counter-terrorism cooperation between British and French intelligence agencies is already strong, but President Macron and I agree that more should be done to tackle the terrorist threat online.

“In the UK we are already working with social media companies to halt the spread of extremist material and poisonous propaganda that is warping young minds.

“And I can announce that the UK and France will work together to encourage corporations to do more and abide by their social responsibility to step up their efforts to remove harmful content from their networks, including exploring the possibility of creating a new legal liability for tech companies if they fail to remove unacceptable content.

“We are united in our total condemnation of terrorism and our commitment to stamp out this evil.”



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National News Headlines April 2017

1st April

- Two million workers receive 4% pay rise
- Marines cuts would harm defence, Fallon told
- The NHS should change, but it must not be allowed to wither away

2nd April

- 'Betrayed' Gibraltar: We warned May of Spain's Brexit plot
- NHS recruits 'must be given special status after Brexit'
- Row over anti-abortion funding from tampon tax

3rd April

- Clamour to trim Lords over expenses scandal
- Abbott condemned for blaming attack on Tories
- UK accused of 'losing cool' on Gibraltar by Spanish minister

4th April

- Five in the dock over 'hate-crime' beating
- I'll be an inspiration to oppressed women in Saudi says Theresa
- Germany: two years not enough for Brexit deal

5th April

- Cabinet split over Brexit as Hammond has a dig at Boris
- May: Don't expect EU free movement to end for 5 years
- Labour mutiny as Livingstone is suspended

6th April

- May blasts Labour for 'betrayal' of the Jewish
- How they've lined up for the UK's overseas cash handouts
- Trump's right-hand man loses national security role



National News Headlines April 2017

7th April

- Leaseholds on new-build homes set to be outlawed
- UK government 'fully supports' US air strike in Syria
- Tunisia sentences British DJ for Muslim prayer remix

8th April

- Blazing Britain hotter than Greece as mercury hits 75F
- M4 death crash: Woman, 66, killed trying to save dog
- Councils issue nearly £9m worth of school absence fines in a single year

9th April

- Labour MPs accused of 'dirty tricks' in union vote
- Bombers back in new strike on Syria sarin attack town
- Boris: Russia must leave Syria

10th April

- Top UK students snubbed as NHS recruits thousands of foreign doctors
- Aggressive and illegal military action damages our ties, Putin tells America
- Pay of Southern rail boss almost doubles

11th April

- Theresa's lead on Corbyn wider than Maggie's over Foot
- Civil service chief dragged into row over Libor
- Marines lose 200 posts to man Navy's £6.2bn aircraft carriers

12th April

- Cancer drug on the NHS...if you live in Scotland
- MPs slate Cameron and Osborne on referendum
- Putin's Syrian stance hardens as Tillerson heads to Moscow



National News Headlines April 2017

13th April

- Grammar schools must serve 'ordinary families'
- May highlights toxic air threat to young children
- Britain hit by surge in violent crime

14th April

- New grammars to prioritise children living in 'ordinary working families'
- Pupils as young as four having panic attacks, say teachers
- Corbyn: Brexit can offer us more power to boost workers' rights

15th April

- Driving test: Learners must be able to use sat navs
- Corbyn: Brexit can offer us more power to boost workers' rights
- China warns of 'imminent' North Korea US conflict

16th April

- Day Brexit Secretary praised EU's single market
- May leads the Tories to record 21-point poll lead over Labour
- Britain set to lose EU 'crown jewels'

17th April

- Diesel drivers to get scrappage cash (but many will miss out)
- Attorney General tries to block bid to prosecute Blair over Iraq
- Government tries to block Iraq war case against Blair

18th April

- Care homes keep charging families after loved one dies
- Row over bid to import cheap US 'chlorine-washed' chicken
- MSPS pledge to tone down rhetoric in Holyrood spats



National News Headlines April 2017

19th April

- General election 2017: May says it strengthens Brexit hand
- Britain's economy to grow more than rivals as IMF alters post-Brexit forecasts
- PM: General election 'will be a vote on Scottish independence'

20th April

- Brexit boost as US Speaker backs free trade deal with UK
- Election isn't just about Brexit, says Corbyn
- Lives at risk if Tories cut aid, Gates warns

21st April

- Tories scrap plan to hike death tax
- Biggest fall in UK retail sales in seven years
- Corbyn may surprise even himself in this election, but his party must show unity

22nd April

- Price hikes prompt biggest fall in household spending for 7 years
- May risks backlash over tax and foreign aid
- Tory manifesto may drop 2015 pledge not to raise taxes

23rd April

- Election: 46 ruddy days to go COR-BINNED
- Lib Dems won't do coalition deals: Farron pledge to voters
- Election is Tory power grab, says EU Brexit chief

24th April

- Le Pen boost pushes France nearer EU exit
- 2,000 elderly and ill die waiting for care at home
- General Election 2017: Energy bill cap 'will hit consumers'



National News Headlines April 2017

25th April

- Children who develop early have greater risk of cancer
- General Election 2017: Labour's 'day one' pledge to EU nationals
- Students told not to obsess over finding job

26th April

- Tories abandon plans to make firms file 5 tax returns a year
- Labour issues threat to PM to get 'best Brexit deal'
- Income gap narrows between UK's rich and poor

27th April

- Cities' diesel smog 'superpollen' blamed for rising hay fever risk
- Millions failed by GPs who shut in the afternoon
- May 'more popular than Thatcher at her peak'

28th April

- Jailed 'killer' Marine is walking free today
- UK economy grows by 0.3% as service sector slows
- Police swoop on suspected terrorist near Westminster

29th April

- Ukip leader set for Mandelson's old Labour seat
- Brexit: EU holds summit without UK to formalise strategy
- Tory MP quits after 'homosexuality is dangerous' remark

30th April

- Border staff told: Don't quiz migrants
- Labour pledge to outlaw all zero-hours contracts
- EU tells May: give our citizens their rights or no trade talks



National News Headlines May 2017

1st May

- Troops miss out on healthcare and housing
- MPs: Put online giants in dock over extremism
- May pledge on VAT but not on income tax

2nd May

- Don't risk our nuclear industry, plead MPs
- Brexit: UK 'will not enter into briefing war' with EC
- EU plots to block May's deal on expats

3rd May

- Brexit: UK and EU at odds over size of 'divorce bill'
- General election 2017: Parties trade blows on tax plans
- Merkel urges Putin to rein in Chechnya on gay rights

4th May

- Corbyn inheritance tax hike would leave thousands worse off
- May unleashes fire at Europe
- Football clubs criticised on mental health

5th May

- Council elections in Wales: Labour losses not as bad as expected
- Queen carries on as her 'strength and stay' retires
- Show respect in Brexit talks, Tusk tells May

6th May

- Union tells Labour: Select our man or we'll stop funding you
- Ukip smashed and Labour struggle on May's big night
- Top Tory group tells May to ditch immigration cap



National News Headlines May 2017

7th May

- Angry Merkel slaps down Juncker for inf laming Brexit talks
- Labour tax to hammer workers on £80,000
- Brexit bill of €100bn cannot be enforced, say EU's lawyers

8th May

- Now council tenants face ban on smoking in their own homes
- Macron wins French presidency – but a country remains divided
- Davidson vows to cut SNP down to size

9th May

- Cannabis could be the new secret weapon in fighting memory loss
- I'm keeping our migration target, vows defiant May
- General election 2017: Tories vow to end 'rip-off' energy bills

10th May

- Luxury life of 'swindler who conned £1m out of EU fund to aid migrants'
- General election 2017: Labour and Lib Dems pledge school cash
- Labour: we'll tax business £20bn to fund education

11th May

- You'll all thank me for terminating FBI boss Comey, insists Trump
- All change: Corbyn pledges to renationalise rail, mail and energy
- Teachers lack the skills to take maths class at primary school

12th May

- First all-female terror cell suspects in the dock
- General election 2017: Jeremy Corbyn says 'I'm not a pacifist'
- Labour election candidates drop Corbyn and use Khan on their campaign leaflets



National News Headlines May 2017

13th May

- Lib Dem plan to let cannabis be sold in high street shops
- NHS cyber-attack: Amber Rudd says lessons must be learnt
- Lib Dems plan to legalise cannabis in bid to combat mental health harm of skunk

14th May

- GPs demand: Force patients to pay to see us
- NHS hacking crisis blamed on failure to upgrade IT
- NHS cyber chaos hits thousands of patients

15th May

- Kim's latest missile test hits 60 miles from Russia
- NHS cyber-attack: Bosses fear further infections from ransomware
- General election 2017: Workers' rights protections promised by Tories

16th May

- Corbyn launches tax war on the middle classes
- Moors Murderer Ian Brady dies
- UK inflation rate at highest level since September 2013

17th May

- Cost of living squeeze as inflation hits 2.7 per cent
- General election 2017: Len McCluskey 'now optimistic Labour can win'
- Capital suffers the fastest fall in house prices

18th May

- Conservative manifesto: Social care shake-up in Theresa May's plans
- Recycling body criticises Pringles and Lucozade packaging
- Middle-class lose winter fuel payments to fund social care



National News Headlines May 2017

19th May

- Labour say curbs on winter fuel payments 'sick and sneaky'
- London City first in UK to get remote air traffic control
- May's manifesto for the mainstream

20th May

- EU fatcats want us to help fund their £166k gold plated pensions
- Tories fear May's social care reforms would be unfair on Londoners
- Scottish to keep winter fuel benefit (because it's colder)

21st May

- MI5 ran file on Corbyn to investigate IRA links
- May's school meals plan 'to hit 900,000 poor children'
- The little stars of Auntie Pippa's wedding

22nd May

- General election 2017: Labour brings forward tuition fees pledge
- Sturgeon put on spot in fiery TV election leaders debate
- Trump urges Muslims: Drive out terrorists

23rd May

- Theresa: We'll spend £10billion on new hospitals
- Labour tuition fees pledge 'not funded'
- May's manifesto meltdown: U-turn on 'dementia tax' leaves PM on back foot

24th May

- Blast was timed to kill as many children as he could
- Troops on the streets in race to foil second terror attack
- He slaughtered innocent girls dazzled by their pop idol. Our hearts break



25th May

- Manchester Terror: Bomber's brother 'knew all about vile plot over a month ago'
- Manchester attack: Police 'not sharing information with US'
- Net migration to the UK falls to 248,000 in 2016

26th May

- Is a SECOND terrorist who built Manchester bomb on the loose?
- Manchester attack: Police make tenth arrest
- General election 2017: Corbyn links terror threat to wars abroad

27th May

- Labour promises flexible train tickets and money for grassroots football
- May puts bombing at heart of election with attack on Corbyn
- Police hold 'large part of killer's network'

28th May

- We need deal with the EU to combat terror, experts tell PM
- En route to blowing up 22 innocents, Manchester bomber caught on camera
- Minister: 'Duplicitous' social media firms failing to halt terror

29th May

- Rise in fake claims is driving up premiums says insurance giant
- Blue Peter presenter John Noakes dies
- Manchester attacks: MI5 probes bomber 'warnings'

30th May

- Macron slams 'lies' from Russia in tense summit with Putin
- Tiger kills keeper in zoo horror
- Corbyn tells Paxman: 'I'm no dictator' in TV debate

31st May

- People-trafficking gang jailed for 50 years
- Brexit expat pensioners 'may cost NHS millions'
- Sterling dips after projection suggests hung parliament



National News Headlines June 2017

1st June

- Diabetes 'will engulf' the NHS as costs rocket to £10bn a year
- Only 7 days to keep Corbyn out of power, Theresa warns voters
- BBC debate: Rivals attack Theresa May over absence

2nd June

- Conservative candidate Craig Mackinlay charged over election expenses
- Paris climate deal: PM May tells Trump of 'disappointment'
- Fake web accounts boosting Labour vote

3rd June

- Why now? Fury as CPS charges Tory MP days before election
- Women and the middle-aged turn backs on May over 'dementia tax'
- Labour accuses Tories of using fake news ads to attack Corbyn

4th June

- Voters: we don't believe Corbyn
- Labour pledges VAT cut to help lower-income families
- Carnage across London as 'terrorists strike again'

5th June

- The power of One Love Manchester
- General election 2017: Security dominates campaigning
- 'Things need to change' in how we tackle terrorism, says May

6th June

- London attack: Met defends dropping inquiry into attacker
- May vows to stop the internet giants showing preachers of hate
- 'Scottish wife' link to terrorist as two of London attackers named



National News Headlines June 2017

7th June

- I'll ditch human rights laws to kick out jihadis says May
- Corbyn at rally attended by jihadis linked to London Bridge killer
- General election 2017: Last push for votes in election campaign

8th June

- IFS: Labour sums don't add up ... and will cost you £750
- General election 2017: Voters to go to the polls
- Firearms officers to patrol election polling stations

9th June

- After a tough campaign then came an anxious wait for leaders
- Theresa May to seek to form UK government
- Election results 2017: Paul Nuttall quits as UKIP leader

10th June

- Corbyn aims for Labour revolution
- May fights to remain PM
- Theresa May tries to move on after humiliating result as critics begin to circle

11th June

- WORLD CUP Late Dallas dazzler seals vital win
- Hammond's horror crash
- May's premiership in peril

12th June

- May calls in Gove to save her from leadership challenge
- DUP pact 'will risk peace process in Ulster'
- May appeals for support as her future hangs in balance



National News Headlines June 2017

13th June

- May: I got us into this mess, I'll get us out
- Theresa May to hold talks with DUP leaders on government deal
- Saturday Night appeal raises £868k for terror victims

14th June

- Highest inflation for 4 years sparks pay squeeze fears
- London fire: Several killed as Grenfell Tower engulfed
- Theresa May and DUP deal could be delayed until next week

15th June

- 'There are so many people missing... possibly hundreds'
- London fire: Grenfell Tower cladding 'linked to other fires'
- 'There were parents throwing kids out of windows, shouting: Save my children'

16th June

- 150,000 illegal migrants 'sneak in each year'
- London fire: Queen and Prince William visit Grenfell Tower centre
- Police: some victims of tower blaze may never be identified

17th June

- May 'distracted as we all are' about Grenfell fire
- Calls for ban on combustible cladding panels on tall buildings
- Anger boils over as fire protesters demand answers on tower deaths

18th June

- Big business leaders press PM to rethink hard Brexit
- Inferno response not good enough, admits PM
- May faces threat of 'stalking horse' leadership challenge



National News Headlines June 2017

19th June

- Alarm over policing cutbacks as total of arrests falls by half
- NSPCC: Facebook is as dangerous as letting 11-year-olds go to nightclub
- Brexit negotiations: David Davis 'positive' as first meeting begins

20th June

- Sir Vince Cable to run for Lib Dem leadership
- Davis and EU slam the door on any hope of soft Brexit
- Watchlist shows spike in far-right extremists

21st June

- DUP warn Tories: You can't take our support for granted
- Labour's no longer party of the working class, says polling guru
- May clings on to Brexit lifeline

22nd June

- Scots could derail May's Brexit Bill
- DUP-Tory deal prospect 'very good' - Sir Jeffrey Donaldson
- One tower, 16 failed council inspections – then 79 died

23rd June

- Thousands facing evacuation as 600 towers to be tested
- London population surges to all-time high of 8.8 million
- May spells out 'fair and serious offer' over rights of EU citizens in Britain

24th June

- Hundreds of homes evacuated over fire risk fears
- Britain takes step closer to armed police
- Sturgeon apologises to farmers over EU 'failures'



National News Headlines June 2017

25th June

- 'Back soft Brexit', unions tell Labour
- A message for the many Corbyn tells Glastonbury: build bridges, not walls
- Blackmail fears after MPs hit by cyber attack

26th June

- Rights law allows 40 Islamists to remain
- Business keeps faith in UK economy as confidence hits an 18-month high
- DUP edges towards deal to prop up May's government

27th June

- Doctors' exodus pushes surgeries 'to the brink'
- Doctors' union claims hospitals crisis is Tory plot to privatise NHS
- £1bn for DUP is 'just the start'

28th June

- Google is fined £2.1bn for online shopping 'abuses'
- Top Tories turn on each other in Brexit row
- Millions face more years of austerity despite May's £1bn deal with Unionists

29th June

- House prices up another £2,500 in Brexit bounce
- Chancellor under attack over softer Brexit deal as cracks in Cabinet widen
- 'Precarious' Scots economy in danger of fresh recession

30th June

- Grenfell Tower: Cladding 'changed to cheaper version'
- Abortion deal avoids defeat for May's plan
- Scottish school budgets cut by £1.2 billion since 2010



