

# Statement to Parliament: EU Transport Council 29 and 30 October 2018

I attended the informal meeting of members of the Transport and Environment Councils in Graz, Austria on 29 and 30 October.

The programme for the Informal meetings included separate sessions for Transport and Environment Ministers and a joint session for both Ministers entitled 'Starting a new era: clean, safe and affordable mobility for Europe'.

On 29 October, Transport Ministers were invited to discuss the Commission's proposal on 'Discontinuing seasonal changes of time (summer time)'. My Noble Friend, The Rt Hon Lord Henley, (Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) represented the UK at this session and explained that the UK government does not support the proposed directive. He also noted the Commission had fallen short on the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality as has been highlighted by the decision of the House of Lords to issue a reasoned opinion. (The House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee has subsequently recommended that the House of Commons also issue a reasoned opinion on this matter.)

There was broad consensus in Council that the timetable proposed by the Commission was too short and thus there was widespread support for the Presidency's intention to provide for an extension. A small minority of Member States were notably critical of the proposal while the majority welcomed the initiative, albeit noting its deficiencies. Several Member States advocated the need to coordinate across borders in order to know the final time zone arrangements before taking the decision to abolish daylight saving.

Environment Ministers were then invited to discuss 'The Future of European Environmental Policy'. The Secretary of State for the Environment was represented by officials from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Ministers broadly agreed on the need for an eighth Environment Action Programme (EAP) with a consensus that it should take full account of climate change given the Report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on Global Warming of 1.5 Celsius published last month.

At the joint session for Transport and Environment Ministers on 30 October, interventions were wide-ranging with common themes being the need to move towards zero emissions vehicles and enabling people to choose sustainable ways to travel. These themes were reflected in the Presidency's 'Graz Declaration' published after the meeting. For the UK, I stressed the importance of ambition to accelerate the development and introduction of zero emission vehicles, recalling that the Prime Minister had hosted the world's first zero emission vehicle summit in Birmingham recently.

The subject for the afternoon session was road safety. Transport Ministers

shared experiences with progress to date in reducing casualties and their perception of the challenges in making more progress. In my intervention I noted that human error was a factor in over 85% of road accidents, and that connected and automated vehicles offered opportunities to make our roads safer.

In the margins I met with a number of EU Transport Ministers to discuss current EU transport business and how relationships will evolve as the UK leaves the EU.

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## [News story: Next phase of multi-million pound college improvement fund launches](#)

More colleges will benefit from a multi-million pound initiative to drive improvements across further education as the second round of the Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) [launches today](#) (6 November).

The Government is transforming technical education in this country, introducing new, gold standard T Levels from 2020 – the technical equivalent to A Levels – and supporting the creation of more high quality apprenticeships.

The SCIF was launched in June 2018 following calls from the sector for a peer-to-peer support programme where stronger colleges help weaker ones to improve. It follows a successful pilot phase, which saw fourteen colleges receive grants totaling over £2million. Outcomes from the pilot showed strong support for the partnership model, and led to colleges reporting that the fund helped build awareness of good practice, fostered mutual learning and enabled rapid action to improve quality.

Alongside the National Leaders of Further Education and National Leaders of Governance programmes, the £15 million SCIF is playing a vital role helping to share best practice, expertise and boost standards so more people can access high quality education and training. Colleges in need of support can apply for funding to work with a stronger ‘partnering’ college to tackle the issues they face and improve quality.

Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Anne Milton said:

Colleges are an extremely important part of our education system, and are absolutely central to our technical education reforms. They play an essential role in making sure people of all ages and backgrounds have the skills they need to get on in life.

I'm thrilled to invite even more colleges to apply for funding from the SCIF. By working together with top colleges, they will get the support they need to make sure their learners get the very best education and training. This will mean more opportunities for people right across the country to access high-quality education and training.

David Corke, Director of Policy at the Association of Colleges, said:

We've been working closely with the Government on this initiative and it's now great to see the development of a peer improvement programme from a sector capacity and capability point of view. It is important to continue to share best practice and look at ways we can continually drive up quality within the sector.

Sixth Form Colleges Association Chief Executive Bill Watkin said:

The Strategic College Improvement Fund has already made a difference to several colleges and the students who attend them, with its focus on identifying where needs are and how those needs can best be met. The SCIF is a valuable framework that supports the sharing of good practice, ensuring that areas for development can be addressed through collaborative approaches with well-matched partners.

We are delighted that Round 2 has been launched and highly recommend that colleges take this opportunity to work with each other to raise, and sustain, standards across the sector.

Deputy Further Education Commissioner SCIF Lead Teresa Kelly said:

It is very exciting that the SCIF has been taken up so positively by the sector and is proving to be a significant tool for quality improvement in colleges. Through the SCIF many colleges are now harnessing the best practice that exists within the sector and applying proven best practice in order to improve the quality of their offer and provision.

The SCIF is enabling colleges to deep dive into developing and improving practical classroom based teaching techniques that will improve the student experience and ultimately the overall performance of the sector.

The list of successful colleges and their partners from the first application round will be published later this month.

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**[Press release: Birmingham duo sentenced for fraud and unqualified](#)**

# immigration advice

A bogus Immigration Adviser from Birmingham who after taking thousands from unsuspecting members of the Pakistani community had his victims intimidated, has been sentenced to 27 months imprisonment.

Safhir Majid, formerly a mortgage advisor, from Cradley Heath, was recently sentenced at Birmingham Crown Court to a total of 27 months imprisonment plus a victim surcharge. Mr Majid is to serve half the sentence in custody and half on licence.

His partner, Shahid Ahmed Bhatti, a former businessman, of Great Barr, was given a 16 month sentence suspended for 24 months plus a victim surcharge.

Mr Majid, 38, and Mr Bhatti, 39, founded Empire Legal Solutions Ltd in Walsall, West Midlands, where they pretended to be qualified immigration advisers with Mr Majid posing as a fake solicitor. They then took monies from unsuspecting members of the public by providing poor advice; in one case £4,500 from a client.

Mr Majid pleaded guilty to five counts of providing unqualified immigration advice and services and one count of fraud by false representation.

Mr Bhatti pleaded guilty to one count of providing unqualified immigration advice and one count of fraud by false representation.

His Honour Judge Mayo said to Mr Majid, "You posed as a lawyer, you knew you were not qualified" and to Mr Bhatti, "Your role was lesser but when required you were able to offer enforcement".

He went on to say concerning one particular case, "You bungled one application and as a result of your incompetence she faces removal from the UK. You threatened her husband and this is despicable behaviour, you threatened again in the case of other victims.

"Offences of this type prey on vulnerable people. Immigration relies on people being properly represented, you were incompetent and greedy. You have made a good deal of money from these frauds".

Commenting on about the decision, Deputy Immigration Services Commissioner Dr Ian Leigh, said: "Safhir Majid and Shahid Ahmed Bhatti set up a criminal enterprise to provide immigration advice when they were not qualified or competent to do so.

"The degree of culpability is high, as is the harm they have caused. They owe a considerable amount of money to individuals, may have caused harm to unknown others and have undermined the immigration system.

"These are extremely serious offences. I am delighted with the outcome in this case."

1. The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), who took out the prosecution, is an independent public body, established under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, to regulate the provision of immigration advice and services in the UK.
2. For further information contact Cornelius Alexander, Corporate Communications Officer, at the OISC on 0207 211 1617.

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Notes to the Editor

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