

Press release: Positive response from EU needed to secure our continent's shared prosperity

- the government's substantial EU Exit white paper stresses the importance of reaching an agreement that benefits the UK and the EU
- latest discussions by Business Secretary with ministers and businesses across Europe underlines need for positive response from the EU

The EU Commission must respond positively to the [Chequers white paper](#) to ensure our continued strong economic ties and avoid sustained economic damage.

This was the message from Business Secretary Greg Clark when he met his ministerial counterparts, businesses and investors in Austria and Finland to discuss how the Chequers white paper sets the foundations for a positive future trade relationship with the EU compared to the negative impact of 'No Deal' on both member states and the UK.

Speaking after his latest discussions in Austria and Finland Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

Since the publication of the white paper I have travelled to 5 EU capitals to discuss our proposals with ministers and businesses. I am confident the UK and the EU now have the foundations and opportunity to come to a pragmatic and mutually beneficial deal.

My discussions across Europe have demonstrated how clearly it is in everyone's interest that an agreement is reached quickly and 'No Deal' is avoided. The Commission has a responsibility to all the people of Europe to respond positively and constructively, if not, the disruption and impact on our continent's businesses, economies, and millions of hard working families across the UK and EU will be significant and lasting.

In Austria (14 August), Greg Clark met Ministers from both of Austria's coalition partners, the People's Party (ÖVP) and the Freedom Party (FPÖ), including the Minister for Economy and Digitalisation Margarete Schramböck (ÖVP) and Vice Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache (FPÖ), as well as leading Austrian businesses with investments in the U.K. and U.K. companies with interests in Austria.

Visiting Finland on Wednesday (15 August), Greg Clark met Mika Lintilä, the Economy Minister and also with Finance Minister Petteri Orpo, as well as Finnish companies with interests in the UK.

The Business Secretary also discussed the challenge and opportunities all

countries are facing in preparing our economies for the industrial revolution that is taking place across almost every sector. Ensuring the UK through its Industrial Strategy builds on its strengths to take advantage of the opportunities that lay ahead and provide the high skilled, well paying jobs in the industries of tomorrow.

Business Secretary has met to discuss the white paper with ministers and businesses in:

- France – Minister for Economy and Finance Delphine Geny, 24 July
- Portugal – Cabinet Minister Pedro Siza Vieira and Economy Minister Dr. Manuel Caldeira, 25 July
- Italy – Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero Milanesi and Europe Minister Paolo Savona, 26 July
- Austria – Minister for Economy Margarete Schramboch and Vice Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache, 14 August
- Finland – Minister of Economic Affairs Mika Lintila and Minister of Finance Petteri Orpo, 15 August

Press release: Smart meter enabled technology could see electric car owners cut bills and make money

- growing number of electric car owners could save and even make money from innovative technology by selling energy back to the grid
- smart energy innovations, including smart tariffs, could save the UK as much as £40 billion between now and 2050

Energy Minister Claire Perry today (16 August 2018) hailed OVO Energy for its “innovative” electric vehicle (EV) products – enabled by smart meters – which could see millions save and even make money from their electric cars.

OVO Energy, based in Bristol city centre and London, is one of just a few companies already using smart meters to offer innovative products, such as rewarding customers for charging their electric vehicles at off-peak times. These offers, made possible thanks to a smart meter, help customers use energy at times when there is less demand on the grid, in turn saving money on their bills.

Smart charging and Vehicle to Grid charging could become a cornerstone of the way we use energy in the UK, with more than 8 million people in Britain considering buying or leasing an electric vehicle in the next 5 years. With this technology, customers will not only be able to choose to use energy at the cheapest times but also make money by selling energy from their vehicle’s battery at times when it is most in demand. This will support the growth of

renewable energy generation in the UK.

Smart energy innovations, such as smart tariffs and smart charging, could save the UK as much as £40 billion between now and 2050.

Smart meters also support OVO's intelligent platform VCharge, which is enabling residential appliances such as electric vehicles, electric heaters and in-home batteries to help balance the grid and reduce energy costs.

Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry said:

More than 11 million meters are already empowering consumers to reap the rewards of a smarter energy system, putting homes and small businesses on the road to a smarter future.

Smart meters will be the cornerstone of a cleaner, flexible and efficient energy system, saving the country tens of billions of pounds.

New innovative products and tariffs like these will put consumers in the fast lane when it comes to control of their energy use, saving and even making them money when using their electric vehicles.

These products are just one of the ways smart meters save money. They put people in control of their energy use by showing them how much energy they use in pounds and pence via an easy to understand In-Home Display. With this information at their fingertips, consumers can easily understand how they can make small changes to the way they use energy in order to use less and save money on their bills – up to £1.2 billion a year by 2030.

Stephen Fitzpatrick, CEO and Founder, OVO said:

Getting the smart meter rollout right should be the top priority for the government and the energy sector in the UK right now so it's encouraging to see the minister here today.

The smart meter rollout is a huge and complicated programme. However, there's no question it needs to be done as we can't build the energy system of the future unless we know accurately how much energy people are using and when.

OVO is using technology like electric vehicles, smart electric heat and batteries to help lower energy bills for consumers and enable us to use more renewable energy. None of this technology will work without smart metering.

We welcome the government's recent efforts to improve the delivery of smart meters but there is still more work to do.

At OVO's offices, the minister also met with their smart meter installation engineers, who undergo thorough training ahead of installations. When having a smart meter installed all homes and small businesses benefit from a free visual safety check of their gas appliances and electricity supply; and the past 18 months alone, installers have raised 430,000 safety notices for issues not related to smart meters during installation visits as part of the free visual safety check provided.

More than 400,000 meters are being installed by energy suppliers across Great Britain each month. Consumers can call their supplier and book an appointment to have one installed.

More than 500,000 households in the South West have already had a smart meter installed and those still without one could save a collective £50 million if they had a smart meter installed. If every household in Great Britain got a smart meter, we could save enough energy to power every household in Exeter, Plymouth and Swindon for 2 years.

Apprentices powering Hinkley Point C

Separately, the minister also visited new nuclear site Hinkley Point C today, where a 250-strong apprentice force is powering this Somerset nuclear project – site owners, EDF expect 1,000 apprentices to work on the project during its lifespan.

Hinkley Point C is the UK's first new nuclear power station in a generation and is poised to make a major contribution to the UK's move to reduce carbon emissions through clean energy production.

Nuclear energy already provides around 20% of the UK's electricity from existing sites and Hinkley Point C's future output will significantly boost this figure. The clean electricity it will generate upon completion is all part of this government's modern Industrial Strategy, which actively encourages clean growth in business and energy production, helping to create better higher-paying jobs across the UK.

Hinkley Point C remains on track to meet its next major milestone, the 2019 nuclear concrete construction target of completing the foundations for the first reactor. Energy production is expected to start in 2025.

Notes to editors

82% of people with smart meters say they have a better idea of their energy costs and 8 out of 10 people with smart meters say they would recommend them to friends or family.

For more information about the benefits smart meters can bring and to dispel myths surrounding them view our explainer '[Smart meters – the smart choice](#)'.

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[News story: RAF helicopters ready to support French in Mali](#)

The helicopters, from RAF Odiham, are providing niche logistical support to French combat forces conducting counter-terrorism operations as part of Operation Barkhane. UK forces have built three temporary aircraft hangers on the ground, enabling the Chinooks to fly multiple missions each week.

Armed Forces minister Mark Lancaster said:

This deployment demonstrates the vital role our Armed Forces play, working alongside our French allies to tackle terrorism and reduce threats to European and UK security.

The deployment is in addition to the UK's long-standing support of UN, EU and G5 Sahel Joint Force operations in Mali aimed at preventing extremists from using the ungoverned space in the Sahel to plan and launch attacks on Europe, as well as countering the illegal trade in people, drugs, weapons and wildlife.

Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin said:

This helicopter deployment demonstrates the UK's commitment to do more in the Sahel, alongside £50m of UK Aid providing lifesaving humanitarian support, and a bigger diplomatic network.

Press release: Paedophile has sentence increased after Unduly Lenient Sentence referral

A man who sexually abused an underage girl over a number of years has had his sentence increased after the Attorney General's Office referred it to the Court of Appeal for being too low.

David Ballinger, 52, began sexually abusing his victim when she was around 10 years old, and continued his offending for many years. The abuse included carrying-out and recording various sexual acts with the victim, as well as coercing her into sending him indecent images.

In addition to this, thousands of indecent images of other children were recovered from Ballinger's computer.

Ballinger was originally sentenced at Gloucester Crown Court in May, where he was sentenced to 8 years and 8 months' imprisonment. Today, after the Unduly Lenient Sentence referral, the Court of Appeal increased his sentence to 12 years 8 months imprisonment plus 1 year extended licence.

Speaking after the hearing, Attorney General Geoffrey Cox QC MP said:

"Ballinger carried out a campaign of sexual abuse against a child over many years, and it is important that this is reflected in his sentence. Following the Court of Appeal's decision today I am satisfied that justice has now been done and seen to be done by those who have suffered at his hands."