

# Government response: HMCTS response to National Audit Office report on court reform programme

Responding to today's report by the National Audit Office, Susan Acland-Hood, the CEO of HM Courts & Tribunals Service said:

Today's report by the National Audit Office (NAO) is helpful and constructive, and rightly highlights the ambitious and transformational nature of the courts and tribunals reform programme.

We are pleased that the NAO acknowledges our 'early progress, and its recommendations are already helping to strengthen the way we run the programme. We are confident, therefore, that the current six-year programme is on track to deliver the benefits promised on completion and, in doing so, help create a better, more straightforward, accessible and efficient justice system for all who use and need it.

The NAO report reflects progress during the first phase of the £1bn court reform programme. This year, HMCTS has opened up new services to the public and scaled up its delivery, including:

- A new fully accessible online Civil Money Claims service giving the public the ability to make a small claim online – with over 3,000 claims issued in the first month, cases moving through more quickly, and user satisfaction over 80% during the pre-launch pilot;
- A new system for applying for divorce online, which has cut errors in application forms from 40% to less than 1%, saving the public time and trouble as well as making our system more efficient;
- A new probate system in testing which has also cut errors, speeds up the process, and has a satisfaction rate in excess of 90%;
- The first-ever fully video hearing took place in the tax tribunal as part of a pilot to test the potential for the use of video more broadly across the courts and tribunals system;
- The national roll-out of a new in-court system to record the results of cases digitally and instantly;
- A national Track Your Appeal service in social security and child support tribunals, allowing thousands of users, many vulnerable, to be kept informed about the progress of their Personal Independent Payment appeal.

The NAO report makes four recommendations focused on creating a greater shared understanding of the programme and its challenges, and improving cross-system working.

Ms Acland-Hood added:

We welcome each of the report's recommendations and are committed to implementing measures to address them. The NAO report has highlighted some areas for us to focus on as the programme continues, and will help us ensure that this vital programme of reform is delivered effectively and efficiently.

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## [Press release: Thousands of road workers' lives are being put at risk](#)

Research by Highways England reveals a catalogue of serious incidents and near misses ranging from motorists driving into coned off areas where road workers are working to physical and verbal abuse.

On average there are nearly 300 incidents a week of incursions and abuse reported by road workers who are busy improving Britain's 4300 miles of motorways and strategic A roads for the benefit of all road users.

And of almost 3500 incidents recorded between July 2017 until September 2017, 150 were serious, leading to four road workers and two motorists being injured. Thousands of road workers' lives are being put at risk, says Highways England

That is why Highways England is calling on road users to be patient if they are delayed by roadworks and to respect road workers doing a difficult job.

The video below shows the unacceptable behaviours that workers are faced with every day. In it, a driver has been stopped at the site of road works on the A120 in Essex involving two barriers in place for drivers to be allowed through with an escort.

### [Incursion – September 2017](#)

The irresponsible driver had already driven around the initial closure point on the wrong side of the road, then drove at speed to attempt to avoid Essex Police who were supporting Highways England in enforcing the closure.

His actions jeopardised the lives of all those road workers on this stretch of road between Braintree and the A12 at Marks Tey.

Another incident captured on video shows a lorry driving through coned off roadworks on the M1.

### [Near miss incursion](#)

Mike Wilson, Chief Highways Engineer, Executive Director Safety, Engineering and Standards at Highways England said:

While we plan our maintenance and improvement works to minimise inconvenience to drivers, some road closures are necessary, and ultimately for the benefit of road users.

Drivers who selfishly and illegally ignore these traffic restrictions force their way through are putting both their lives and those of our road workers at risk – all to save a few minutes on their journey.

Also since October 2014, some 341 incidents of either verbal or physical abuse towards workers were recorded across England.

Amongst the most common targets for verbal abuse are Highways England traffic officers, who patrol motorways and A-roads 24/7. Their role is to deal with incidents as they happen and keep people safe by implementing lane closures where required.

Adie Whiting, 33, a married father of three from Doncaster, has worked for Interserve on behalf of Highways England as a traffic control safety officer, deploying cones, signs, barriers and temporary traffic signals.

I've been sworn at a lot, physically threatened on occasions and even had someone try to run me over once.

You have to have a thick skin doing this job.

Road worker abuse often occurs during incursions, whereby drivers seek to ignore a road closure to drive through instead, often failing to heed advance warning signs of upcoming closures.

Highways England is reminding motorists of their responsibility while driving through roadworks, with these four key messages:

- respect our road workers – slow down near road works and obey speed limits and signs.
- just because workers aren't visible, it doesn't mean they are not present. This is especially true when operations take place at night, but also applies when visibility is restricted by works vehicles and equipment.
- we plan maintenance and improvement projects to allow works to proceed in the safest and most cost-effective way, with minimum disruption to road users.
- think what it would be like if you had to contend with lorries and cars driving through your place of work.

## General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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# [Press release: Dr Fox announces private sector ties to boost UK exports](#)

The UK's export credit agency and Atkins International, a world leader in international project management and engineering projects, have agreed to work together to grow the company's UK supply chain and boost UK exports.

Under the partnership, UK Export Finance (UKEF) and Atkins will identify and promote opportunities for UK infrastructure and engineering suppliers on Atkins' projects backed by UKEF financing. This will help UK companies secure business across more than 15 international markets, boosting their export sales and revenue.

The announcement will be made today by International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox MP, at the government's first UK Trade and Export Finance Forum, hosted by UKEF and the Department for International Trade (DIT).

Dr Fox will also announce UKEF support of more than £100 million for the construction of the fourth phase of the Dubai World Trade Centre by ASGC UK.

Phase four will see the construction of an onsite hotel and will generate significant business for UK businesses, with nearly half of the supplies and services for project expected to come from the UK. This builds on UKEF support for the first three phases of the project which also included significant UK content.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox MP, will say:

The UK's reputation for high-quality manufacturing and highly-skilled construction is renowned the world over. This government, through UK Export Finance, is taking a proactive approach to bringing business to the UK, with wide-reaching benefits for both individual UK businesses and the UK export economy as a whole.

In UK Export Finance, the UK's export community truly has a world-class export credit agency.

After Dr Fox's speech, Baroness Fairhead, Minister of State for Trade and Export Promotion, will deliver an address on her ambitions for UK exporters. Her speech will highlight government support that is available for businesses that want to start exporting today and the government's forthcoming Export Strategy.

The UK Trade and Export Finance Forum is designed to boost understanding of export finance and support available from the UK's export credit agency among the UK business community. It will be attended by 400 representatives of UK and international business and finance.

Among those speaking will be:

- John Mahon, the newly appointed Director General for Exports at the Department for International Trade
- Antonia Romeo, Permanent Secretary of the Department for International Trade
- Louis Taylor, CEO of UK Export Finance
- Baroness Northover, HM Trade Envoy for Angola and Zambia
- Baroness Nicholson, HM Trade Envoy for Iraq, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan
- Senior representatives from major UK exporter Alexander Dennis and multinational companies General Electric and Bechtel

DIT's Export Hub will be stationed outside the forum at the Queen Elizabeth II Centre as part of the Exporting is GREAT campaign. It will showcase the campaign's export champions from across the UK and trade experts will be on hand to offer advice on exporting.

### **Further information**

This year UKEF has increased – and in many cases, doubled – its financial capacity to support exports to over 100 markets around the world, as the UK seeks to enforce its position as a leading player in the global market, and make world-leading UK expertise, products and services accessible to buyers around the world.

In 2017, UKEF was awarded 'best export credit agency' by Global Trade Review and Trade Finance magazines.

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**[Press release: UK launches new](#)**

# research and innovation hub to tackle scourge of plastic in our seas and oceans

- UK's world-leading researchers to collaborate with peers from Canada, India and other Commonwealth countries to tackle this global challenge
- new global hub will bring together scientific and technical expertise to share the latest thinking on creating sustainable alternatives to plastic and stopping plastic entering oceans
- high-profile names Unilever and Waitrose are backing the hub financially
- British Plastics Federation and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation are among the top names that have given their support

The UK, working with other Commonwealth countries, will launch a research and innovation hub for experts to develop solutions to stop plastic waste from entering our oceans and find environmentally-friendly alternatives to plastic.

India, Canada and other Commonwealth nations have already signed up to be part of the new Marine Plastics Research and Innovation Framework – a hub where researchers will be able to connect and collaborate on the latest research and innovations to tackle marine plastics.

The UK will play a leading role in designing and running the Framework, encouraging the world to move towards clean growth through the government's modern [Industrial Strategy](#). An international steering board will oversee the work.

The Prime Minister announced that the [UK would contribute £25 million to the Framework](#) during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London.

So far Unilever has committed £5 million in research and development, while Waitrose has pledged £0.5 million of research.

The British Plastics Federation, which represents more than 500 UK companies, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), RPC Group Plc and engineering giant Mott MacDonald are among those who have given their support, including access to their facilities, networks and expertise.

Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry said:

Plastics are not only polluting our waters, they are contributing to climate change and killing sea life.

This Framework will help develop options for alternative uses to prevent plastics from ending up in our seas. It also ensures that the UK is at the forefront of encouraging the world to move towards

clean growth, tackling the threat from marine plastic and protecting our oceans for future generations.

Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, Sam Gyimah said:

Plastics are clogging our oceans and threatening our sea life to devastating effect.

This hub will bring together the brightest minds in UK science and innovation to solve this problem.

Chief Executive Officer of Unilever Paul Polman said:

It is critical that governments, businesses and others from across the Commonwealth work in partnership to step away from our take-make-dispose model of consumption.

We are delighted to be contributing £5 million worth of research and development to the Framework.

Managing Director of Waitrose Rob Collins said:

With plastic waste one of the great challenges of our time, we strongly support the Commonwealth Summit's plans and targets to tackle this issue.

1. This Framework will bring together experts, governments and businesses from across the Commonwealth to support knowledge sharing and new research in a broad range of issues – from stopping plastic waste entering the oceans in the first place and fostering a more circular economy, to exploring sustainable ways to clean up our seas and developing environmentally friendly alternatives to plastic.
2. [The Prime Minister speaks at the Commonwealth Joint Forum Plenary: 17 April 2018](#)
3. Our [Clean Growth Strategy](#), published October 2017, commits government to work towards an ambition for zero avoidable waste by 2050.

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**[Press release: Director of Labour](#)**

# Market Enforcement calls for measures to tackle exploitation of low paid workers

- [Director of Labour Market Enforcement](#) calls for holiday pay to be enforced and payslips for all workers
- new [independent report](#) includes recommendations for bigger financial penalties for employers who break the law and tougher enforcement of rights for agency workers
- Sir David Metcalf calls for big companies to share responsibility for wrongdoing in the supply chain, including naming firms whose suppliers break employment law
- HMRC stats out today show its enforcement team helped 200,000 workers get pay owed to them

Sir David Metcalf's independent strategy published today (Wednesday 9 May 2018) includes recommendations on:

- higher financial penalties for employers who exploit their workers and pursuing more prosecutions
- enforcing holiday pay and making it the law that employers must provide a statement of rights for employees and a payslip for all workers
- making leading brands jointly responsible for non-compliance in their supply chains. This would be done in private but with public naming of the brand and supplier for failure to correct non-compliance
- more resources to the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate to enforce current regulations and expanding their remit to cover umbrella companies and intermediaries
- locally or regionally piloting licencing of hand car washes and nail bars, which have been identified as sectors at risk of labour exploitation
- tackling 'phoenixing' – the practice of directors dissolving their companies to avoid paying workers tribunal awards and other enforcement penalties

The report is launched as new HMRC stats show that its enforcement teams have doubled the number of underpaid workers they have recouped money for to 200,000 in 2017.

Sir David Metcalf said:

This strategy sets out how we can toughen up enforcement activity to protect vulnerable workers and ensure that good, compliant firms are not undercut by unscrupulous competitors.

It's important the government has the necessary powers to crack down on bad bosses who exploit and steal from their workers – that



includes bigger penalties to put employers off breaking the law.

I'd like to thank all the employers, workers and regulators I have met in the last year that have given me very valuable insights into the labour market.

Sir David Metcalf was appointed in January 2017 to oversee a government crackdown on exploitation in the workplace by setting the strategic priorities for the government's 3 enforcement agencies:

- HMRC's National Minimum Wage (NMW) enforcement team
- the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA)
- the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate (EAS)

In February 2018 the government set out its 'Good Work plan' which introduced new reforms to ensure employment law and practice, giving millions of workers new day-one rights with sick and holiday pay to be enforced for vulnerable workers for the first time. The plan included proposals to increase transparency in the labour market, employment status, agency workers and enforce employment rights, with workers given new rights to get a payslip and a list of their rights when they start a job. In March the government also launched a consultation to improve the UK's corporate governance framework which included proposals to give the Insolvency Service new powers to investigate directors of dissolved companies.

Business Minister Andrew Griffiths said:

We will not accept illegal behaviour from bosses who exploit their workers and cheat the competition which is why we are already cracking down on irresponsible company directors and boosting protections for workers.

We will enforce holiday pay and give new rights for every worker to get a payslip and a list of their rights when they start a job as part of our modern Industrial Strategy plans to build a Britain fit for the future.

I'd like to thank Sir David for his important work looking at enforcement and exploitation in the labour market.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability Victoria Atkins said:

Forced labour and other forms of modern slavery are cruel, barbaric crimes no individual should suffer and we will continue to work with Sir David Metcalf and other partners to stop the abuse of vulnerable workers.

Through the Modern Slavery Act and reforms to the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, our world leading approach means law

enforcement have the powers to identify victims, protect vulnerable people and bring offenders to justice.

I am pleased that the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority is using its new powers to tackle worker exploitation across the economy with successful investigations into high risk sectors, such as hand car washes and nail bars.

The government will respond formally to Sir David's report in full later this year.

1. The government's [Good Work plan](#) was published in February 2018, launching consultations on increasing transparency in the labour market, employment status, agency workers and enforcing employment rights. This was in response to [Matthew Taylor's review into modern working practices](#) in July 2017.
2. The government is [consulting on measures](#) to crack down on company directors who unfairly shield themselves from the effects of insolvency and profit from business failures while workers and small suppliers lose out.
3. The Immigration Act 2016 created measures to improve the response to labour market enforcement including creating the role of the Director of Labour Market Enforcement and reforms including widening the remit of the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (previously the Gangmasters Licensing Authority) and giving it new powers under the Police Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to investigate labour market offences across the entire economy. The Act also introduced new Labour Market Enforcement Undertakings and Orders to tackle serious or persistent offenders.