

News story: Crescent Moon Visibility for Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr 2018

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News story: Civil news: CLA market engagement

The Legal Aid Agency (LAA) will shortly be inviting tenders to award new Civil Legal Advice (CLA) specialist telephone advice contracts in the discrimination category of law.

CLA provides access to legally aided advice in specified categories of law, including discrimination, for eligible individuals. Most CLA advice is delivered by telephone but in some instances face to face advice may be provided.

The procurement process for CLA discrimination contracts is expected to open in late April, with services under new contracts commencing on 1 September 2018.

Before beginning the tender process, LAA is holding a market engagement event for organisations that may be interested in tendering for this service.

At the event LAA will provide information on:

- the tender process for CLA discrimination contracts
- the CLA service and contract
- the changes we intend to make to how CLA discrimination services currently operate

We will welcome feedback from attendees and will answer questions organisations may have. The market engagement event will be delivered via a web hosted event at 11 am on 16 April. We expect the session to last approximately 1 hour.

Organisations wishing to attend must register by 12 noon on Friday 13 April 2018 to secure their place.

[Register online](#) for LAA market engagement event.

Should a large number of applicants be interested in attending we may need to limit the number per organisation and/or representatives from prospective bidding organisations will be prioritised over third party consultants.

For those who cannot attend this event, information will be published on LAA's tender pages shortly afterwards.

Further information

Questions or requests to attend should be sent to civil.contracts@justice.gov.uk.

News story: Jo Johnson: unprecedented new powers for Transport for the North are 'crucial next step'

- Rail Minister attends first Transport for the North Partnership Board in Liverpool
- TfN now hold powers to drive forward long-term strategic transport projects and have proposals considered by government
- Rail Minister will also visit Liverpool Lime Street to see progress on delivering the Great North Rail Project worth well over £1 billion

Jo Johnson is encouraging the north to speak with one 'strong, unified voice' after meeting leaders from across the region in Liverpool today (5 April 2018) to discuss the unprecedented new powers of Transport for the North (TfN).

The Rail Minister called upon northern leaders to drive forward vital transport projects such as Northern Powerhouse Rail after he attended the first meeting [since TfN was legally established as England's first sub-national transport body](#) – backed by £260 million of government funding.

Rail Minister Jo Johnson said:

Between 2015 and 2020 the government will have spent over £13 billion – more than any other in history – to transform northern transport, boosting economic growth and unlocking the incredible potential of the great towns and cities of the north.

Establishing Transport for the North is a crucial next step in giving the north greater influence than ever over transport investment. It is imperative that the north now speaks with a strong, unified voice to identify where we can work together to transform journeys for people.

The fantastic progress on upgrades to Liverpool Lime Street, which will enable more trains every hour and direct services to Scotland, demonstrates our unwavering commitment to delivering the transport links the north needs.

With significant new powers to drive forward transformative projects like Northern Powerhouse Rail and smart ticketing, I am confident that TfN will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of northern transport.

[Transport for the North promotional video](#)

During his visit to Liverpool Lime Street, Jo Johnson met with Network Rail staff delivering major upgrades to platforms and signalling at the great Victorian station, as part of the Great North Rail Project.

With work to deliver an extra platform to be completed this summer, the upgrade will enable 3 new services per hour in and out of Lime Street.

Patrick Cawley, director of route sponsorship at Network Rail, said:

Our major transformation of Liverpool Lime Street is a key part of the Great North Rail Project, and it will be fantastic to show Rail Minister Jo Johnson what we've done so far and what work is currently being delivered while the station remains open.

Once complete in October this year, passengers will see completely remodelled platforms and 2 brand new platforms, increasing the total number to 10.

Longer, better managed platforms will accommodate longer trains, helping provide more space and seats for passengers. This is vital ahead of the significant increase in passengers expected in the coming years.

[News story: Scottish quarterly GDP](#)

figures show continued growth

Commenting on the Scottish GDP figures published Wednesday 4 April 2018, Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

It is good news that today's GDP figures show that Scotland's economy continues to grow. I note a modest improvement in Scotland's important services sector, and encouraging growth in production industries.

However, it is increasingly concerning that a significant gap persists between Scotland's economy and the rest of the UK. The Scottish Government has the powers to boost productivity and strengthen the economy, and must use them to close this gap. By making Scotland the highest taxed part of the UK, the Scottish Government risks damaging, rather than growing, our economy.

Scotland's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 0.3% in real terms during the fourth quarter of 2017, following growth of 0.2% in the third quarter of 2017. The equivalent growth rate for the UK as whole during the third quarter was 0.4%.

In the latest quarter, output in the Scottish Services sector grew by 0.5%, output in the Production sector grew by 0.9%, and output in the Construction sector fell by 2.6%.

Compared to the same quarter last year, Scottish GDP has grown by 1.1%. Equivalent UK growth over the year was 1.4%.

In 2017, annual GDP increased by 0.8% compared to 2016, following growth of 0.2% between 2015 and 2016. The equivalent UK growth rate for 2017 was 1.8%.

The full Scottish Government [statistical bulletin](#) is available for download.

Press release: New building performance standards to save MOD up to 20%

Infrastructure is a vital defence capability delivering accommodation, training facilities and critical assets such as runways and workshops to enable our armed forces to live, work, train and deploy. Recent DfE projects include building a jetty at Portsmouth Naval Base so the aircraft carrier HMS

Queen Elizabeth can dock, and resurfacing runways at RAF Akrotiri, RAF Gibraltar, and RAF Valley.

The defence estate is large, diverse and widely dispersed across the UK and overseas. In the UK, it covers around 230,000 hectares comprising military training areas, naval bases, barracks, airfields, supply depots, and offices. Construction on these sites is sometimes subject to specific defence requirements but the majority is similar to other sectors, so the new standards have been developed in accordance with comparators from industry and other government departments. They are designed to be used by MOD staff and industry partners responsible for the planning, costing and delivery of the infrastructure assets and projects funded by MOD.

The new standards, Joint Services Publication (JSP) 315, are expected to save up to 20% on construction costs by creating efficient standards, enabling faster and more cost-effective project development and delivery. They also recognise the success and cost savings DIO has achieved in recent years from increasing the use of modular construction and standardisation of designs, as well as utilising 3D digital and interactive technology.

Graham Dalton, DIO's Chief Executive, said:

The new standards mark a step forward in how DIO enables our military to provide the most effective and efficient solutions and how we work better with the construction industry. The revised standards make it absolutely clear what our requirements are and will contribute to a significant cost and time saving on our infrastructure projects.

The new standards and supporting guidance set a series of reference designs for specific defence infrastructure requirements and benchmark capital and operational costs for the planning and delivery of MOD infrastructure.

The revised JSP 315 can be found [here](#)