

Press release: Search underway for UK's first Small Business Commissioner

- Commissioner appointment an important measure in tackling late payment issues
- Expected to be based in Birmingham, the Commissioner will be a national champion for small businesses

Applications are open to become the UK's first Small Business Commissioner – a high profile role supporting small businesses in payment disputes with their larger customers.

The successful candidate will provide general advice and information, handle complaints about payment issues and direct small businesses to existing dispute resolution services. Recent findings from the payment processor Bacs report that nearly half of the UK's small-to-medium sized businesses experience late payment, with £26.3 billion owed to them in total.

Applications open today (12 February 2017) and run until Monday 13 March 2017. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is looking for candidates who have credibility with both small and large businesses; can advise parties in resolving disputes; and who have an appetite to become a national spokesperson for small businesses affected by payment issues.

The final appointment decision will be made by the Secretary of State, supported by a panel which will include Mike Cherry, the National Chairman at the Federation of Small Businesses.

Small Business Minister Margot James said:

We all rely on the UK's 5.5 million small and medium sized businesses for jobs, goods and services, and an unfair payment culture that hurts these firms has no place in an economy that works for all. This is why we are looking for an exceptional individual to help smaller firms resolve payment disputes and champion a culture change in how businesses work together.

Addressing the barriers businesses face when scaling up and growing is an important part of a modern Industrial Strategy, and this appointment will play an integral role in ensuring small businesses have the support they need to thrive and grow.

Mike Cherry, National Chairman at the Federation of Small Businesses, said:

I am delighted to be invited by the Secretary of State to be part of the selection process for the Small Business Commissioner. There is simply no excuse for a business culture where supply chain

bullying or poor payment practice are acceptable. FSB research shows that poor payment practice is on the rise, causing 50,000 business deaths each year.

Small firms need a Commissioner who will make a meaningful difference to the £26bn currently stuck in bank accounts as payments outstanding to SMEs. He or she must be given the powers and resources to tackle this, to step in to save small firms whose livelihoods are under threat, and to promote a prompt payment culture right across the economy.

The Small Business Commissioner, expected to be based in Birmingham, is just one part of a package of measures designed to tackle this and drive a real change in the UK's payment culture. Regulations coming into force in April 2017 will require big businesses to publically report on the time taken to pay their suppliers, and guidance to help large businesses comply with these changes was published last month. This will shine a light on poor payment practices and allow suppliers, including small businesses, to make informed decisions about who they do business with.

[Press release: Blockbuster year for the Brits](#)

Spend on UK film and TV production in the UK soared in 2016, reaching £1.6 billion, a 13 per cent increase on 2015, according to figures released by the BFI. Of that, £1.35 billion was invested by 48 major inward investment films basing themselves in the UK.

Showing that we're more than capable of competing on the world stage, this year's top three grossing films at the UK box office were all made on British soil: Rogue One: A Star Wars Story, Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them and Bridget Jones's Baby. Overall there was a good turnout at the UK box office too, with cinema ticket sales at a second time high, raking in £1.227 billion.

But film wasn't the only sector to thrive in 2016. TV too had its moment, with overseas companies flocking to the UK to spend £478 million on making high-end TV shows such as The Crown and Game of Thrones.

Foreign markets were also clamouring for our creative content, with figures from PACT's UK Television Exports Report showing that UK's sales of television exports to international markets have risen by 10 per cent, from £1.2 billion in 2014/15 to £1.3 billion in 2015/16. There's also been a large increase in sales in the Chinese market, which is up 40 per cent on 2014/15, with the UK and China TV co-production treaty signed at the end of last year

sure to further boost those numbers.

Culture Secretary Karen Bradley said:

It's no surprise that our creative industries go from strength to strength when we can boast such superb talent and expertise. The UK is an international powerhouse of film, TV and music and this Government will keep backing our creative brilliance. As we prepare to leave the European Union this success story is a great advert for Global Britain – an outward-looking, globally-minded country that is open for business.

Proving that music is the UK's forte, figures released by UK record labels' association the BPI, showed that the continuing surge in audio streaming and accelerating demand for vinyl LPs helped achieve another successful year for British music in 2016. We were listening to even more music last year thanks to an explosive rise in audio streaming, which has increased 500 per cent since 2013.

Geoff Taylor, Chief Executive of BPI and the BRIT Awards said:

Propelled by the remarkable talent of its artists, and the investment and digital engagement of its record labels, British music has conquered the world. This success has not just fuelled our music exports – in 2015 accounting for 1 in 6 albums sold around the world – it has enhanced the global appeal of British culture and in the process also made music the UK's international calling card.

Our acts dominated the UK charts, with 7 out of the year's top 10 best-selling artists coming from the UK. The popularity of Tottenham's Adele showed no sign of diminishing, with the songstress again winning 2016's best-selling artist album – the 12th year in a row the best-seller has come from UK. Other British acts that fared well include Michael Ball and Alfie Boe, whose duets album Together was the 2016's best-selling new release artist album, while The 1975 topped both the UK and US charts. With the BAFTAs and Grammys set to take centre stage this evening, and the BRIT awards and Oscars just around the corner, it looks like there will be even more to celebrate in 2017.

Adele and the late David Bowie lead the charge at this year's Grammys, and there's a visual feast of TV and film up for nomination at this year's BAFTAs including Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them.

The Brit awards will be the ultimate British celebration of some of our best talent, and with a slew of British talent vying for Oscars, we will be able to reaffirm to the world that our creative industries are a force to be reckoned with, even though we contain less than one per cent of the world's population.

According to the British Film Commission, there are a whole host of UK-made films set to wow us this year as they hit the big screen including Warner Bros.'s Ready Player One, Disney's Beauty and the Beast, Lucasfilm's Star Wars: The Last Jedi and Twentieth Century Fox's Murder on the Orient Express.

And proving that Britain is still open for business and has the global reputation to attract talent from overseas, expect to see the likes of Mary Poppins Returns and detectives Holmes and Watson being filmed in the UK this year.

Amanda Nevill, CEO of the BFI said:

British stories and British talent are firing the global imagination. Films and television series such as I, Daniel Blake, Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them, Notes on Blindness and The Crown are generating investment, creating jobs and thrilling audiences – and fingers crossed winning yet more awards – at home and internationally. UK Film and TV employ tens of thousands in the UK, help bring international investment to our shores and take British culture to nations around the world. We can all be justifiably proud of the UK's success in these most dynamic and exciting art-forms.

As for TV produced in the UK, we can expect to see more of HBO's Game of Thrones on our sets, along with Netflix/Left Bank's The Crown, Starz'/Company Pictures The White Princess, Crackle's Snatch, TNT's Will and Sony's Outlander.

It looks to be a stellar line-up for music too, with the likes of Stormzy, Gorillaz, Paul McCartney, Ed Sheeran, Tinie Tempah, Liam Gallagher and Deep Purple all set to put out new music.

Notes to Editors

- The UK-China TV Co-Production Treaty was signed in December 2016. Building upon the Film Co-Production Treaty, this is the second country to have this in place.
 - Inward investment for Film is: £1.35 billion and for TV is 250 million.
 - In 2014, the UK film industry had a turnover of £7.7 billion. The industry's direct contribution to Gross Domestic Product in 2014 was £4.3 billion. The industry exported £1.2 billion worth of services in 2014, made up of £519 million in royalties and £655 million in film production services. Exports in 2014 were 21 per cent higher than in 2005. The UK film trade surplus in 2014 was £715 million. (BFI).
 - Exports for Music in 2014 stood at £644 million.
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[Press release: 50 days to go until new vehicle tax rates come into force](#)

From:

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DVLA is reminding motorists that there are just 50 days to go until new vehicle tax rates come into force for all cars and some motor homes that are first registered from 1 April 2017.

Rohan Gye, DVLA Vehicle Service Manager, said:

These changes won't affect any vehicles that are registered before 1 April 2017. So, for anyone who already owns a car or is thinking of buying a used car the rates of vehicle tax will not be changing. However, anyone considering buying a new car that will be first registered from 1 April should check the [vehicle tax rates table](#) on GOV.UK to find out how much they'll pay.

Under the changes, vehicle tax for the first year will continue to be based on CO2 emissions. After the first year, the amount of tax to pay will depend on the type of vehicle. The new rates are:

- £140 a year for petrol or diesel vehicles
- £130 a year for alternative fuel vehicles (hybrids, bioethanol and LPG)
- £0 a year for vehicles with zero CO2 emissions

In addition, for vehicles with a list price of more than £40,000, the rate of tax is based on CO2 emissions for the first year. After the first year, the rate depends on the type of vehicle (petrol, diesel, zero emission etc) and an additional rate of £310 a year for the next 5 years. After those 5 years, the vehicle will then be taxed at one of the standard rates (£140, £130 or £0) depending on the vehicle.

There is also [further information](#) available on the changes.

[Press release: Extracurricular cyber](#)

clubs to inspire and identify tomorrow's cyber security professionals

The Cyber Schools Programme aims to support and encourage schoolchildren to develop some of the key skills they would need to work in the growing cyber security sector and help defend the nation's businesses against online threats.

Up to £20m is available to deliver an extracurricular school programme which will see an army of expert external instructors teaching, testing and training teenagers selected for the programme, with a comprehensive cyber curriculum expected to mix classroom and online teaching with real-world challenges and hands-on work experience.

The Cyber Schools Programme, led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), is aimed at those aged between 14 and 18, with a target for at least 5,700 teenagers to be trained by 2021.

This programme is for students with the aptitude and enthusiasm for the subject. It aims to appeal to children from all backgrounds, including those currently underrepresented in cyber security jobs.

Cyber security is an exciting industry with strong job prospects. Recent figures from the Tech Partnership show there are already 58,000 cyber security specialists in a growing sector worth £22bn a year to the economy. This is part of the Government's commitment to prepare Britain for the challenges it faces now and in the future.

Minister of State for Digital and Culture Matt Hancock said:

This forward-thinking programme will see thousands of the best and brightest young minds given the opportunity to learn cutting-edge cyber security skills alongside their secondary school studies. We are determined to prepare Britain for the challenges it faces now and in the future and these extracurricular clubs will help identify and inspire future talent.

Students will be expected to commit to four hours a week. This will include classroom-based and online-teaching with flexibility around exams and busier study periods.

The aim is for students to start aged 14 and complete a four-year programme. It will be delivered in modules, meaning older students can join at any point providing they meet the right criteria. The provider will have the flexibility to decide the most appropriate way to deliver the programme, and the pilot, to begin in September 2017, will be monitored and reviewed after

the first year.

The programme is all part of the Government's National Cyber Security Programme to find, finesse and fast-track tomorrow's online security experts.

It includes the recently announced [CyberFirst bursary funding scheme](#), which offers grants of up to £4,000 for up to 1,000 students by 2020 to study a relevant degree, do a placement or attend a summer school and, depending on meeting requirements, the chance to work in national security on graduation.

There are 2,500 free places on CyberFirst in 2017 and an additional [CyberFirst Girls Competition](#), where teams of 13-to-15-year-old young women can pit their wits against one another to crack a series of online puzzles.

DCMS is also supporting leading employers in critical energy and transport infrastructure to train and recruit up to 50 highly skilled apprentices aged 16 and over to help defend essential services against cyber attacks. The [Cyber Security Apprenticeships for Critical Sectors Scheme](#) is open now for applications for those with a natural flair for problem solving and who are passionate about technology.

A [Cyber Retraining Academy](#), launched in January, is also helping more than 50 high-aptitude people fast-track into the cyber security industry with a ten-week intensive training course.

Notes to Editors

- Media enquiries – please contact the DCMS News and Communications team on 020 7211 2210 or out of hours on 07699 751153.
- DCMS are [seeking providers](#) to deliver this prestigious new schools programme. Bids close on the 13th March 2017.

[Press release: North West traffic officers featured in Channel 5 documentary](#)

Three North West traffic officers will be featured in a new Channel 5 series which shows the work involved in keeping the roads moving during the winter months.

A film crew from Winter Road Rescue has spent several shifts with Highways England traffic officers Jason Williamson, Mike Caffrey and Barry Connolly this winter, following the incidents they respond to on some of the England's busiest stretches of motorway.

Jason, Mike and Barry are among over 1,000 traffic officers who respond to

over 200,000 incidents every year. They are based at Newton-le-Willows – one of 33 traffic officer outstations on the motorway network – and their patch includes both the M62 and M6.

They can be called out to a wide range of incidents – from minor breakdowns to major collisions – and some of the recent incidents they have attended will be shown in the new series of Winter Road Rescue at 8pm on Channel 5, starting on Monday 13 February.

Jason Williamson, 48, has been a traffic officer for 7 years. The married father-of-three from Macclesfield spent several years with the Royal Air Force Police before signing up as a traffic officer. Jason said:

I was pleased that we were asked to get involved with Winter Road Rescue as we were able to show some of the work we do to keep the roads moving.

Drivers often only see us when we've finished dealing with an incident and the road's reopened. They don't see us helping drivers, moving badly-damaged vehicles or clearing up spillages that would otherwise cause hours of delays, so I hope some of that comes across in the programme.

The new series of Winter Road Rescue will also feature Highways England's North West regional control centre in Newton-le-Willows, where incidents are monitored on CCTV cameras and responded to 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Mike Caffrey, 27, from Warrington, joined Highways England as a traffic officer in September last year. He said:

I really like the variety of the job and the fact that it's such an unusual role. When I applied to become a traffic officer, it sounded different to anything else I'd done and has definitely lived up to expectations. Every day is different.

I get a buzz coming to work as you never know how your shift is going to play out. We perform a vital job on the motorway network and I feel lucky to be a part of a role helping members of the public to be safe and to arrive at their destination safely.

To be able to make a positive difference to someone's day, no matter how small, is a real enjoyment.

Highways England is urging drivers to adapt their driving to the changing conditions on the road this winter after the latest annual figures revealed that travelling too fast for the conditions is a factor in 1 in 9 of all road deaths in Great Britain.

A new safety campaign is warning drivers that 'when it rains, it kills' after

the figures also showed that people are 30 times more likely to be killed or seriously injured on the roads in rain than in snow.

It generally takes at least twice as long to stop on a wet road as on a dry road because tyres have less grip on the surface. In wet weather you should:

- slow down if the rain and spray from vehicles is making it difficult to see and be seen
- keep well back from the vehicle in front as this will increase your ability to see and plan ahead
- ease off the accelerator and slow down gradually if the steering becomes unresponsive as it probably means that water is preventing the tyres from gripping the road

A new road safety video, showing rain falling inside the home of a family imagined to have been involved in a serious road collision, is available to [watch on our YouTube channel](#).

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.