

[Policy paper: Government response to the Select Committee report: the future of public parks](#)

This publication sets out the response by Marcus Jones, Minister for Parks and Green Spaces, to the 17 recommendations made by the Communities and Local Government Select Committee in their [report](#) published on 30 January 2017.

[News story: Reducing regulatory burden: the Ofqual handbook and more](#)

Ofqual announces package of measures to reduce regulatory burden, including a new online handbook.

Today (19 September 2017) Ofqual is announcing a package of measures that support our commitment to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden.

In October, we will be launching a preview version of the Ofqual handbook – a new, online resource that brings together all our general rules and guidance, making them easier to use and understand.

We are also confirming several changes to our wider regulatory framework, removing some unnecessary rules and updating others.

The Ofqual handbook

We have designed the handbook to replace 6 existing documents. It will provide:

- simpler, at-a-glance, navigation – related requirements and guidance are grouped together, with no need to navigate between different documents
- enhanced interactivity – including hyperlinked cross-references and tooltips on defined terms
- better accessibility – built using GOV.UK, the handbook complies with a wide range of accessibility standards, and is compatible with assistive software such as screen readers, speech recognition and magnifiers

The handbook will be available alongside the existing documents during a test period (which runs until the end of the year). We will be seeking feedback on the handbook before taking a final decision on rollout in early 2018. We will be previewing the Ofqual handbook in a [live webinar on 5 October](#). We will

also be holding [face-to-face workshops on 24 October, 27 October and 7 November](#), for those who are interested to learn more about it and provide feedback.

Reviewing our regulatory framework

Today, we are confirming a number of changes that remove redundant rules.

1. In line with [our earlier announcement](#), we have withdrawn our 'Criteria for Key Skills Qualifications'.
2. We have also withdrawn our legacy subject criteria for the GCSEs, AS and A levels that were reformed for first teaching in September 2015. Students can no longer take these qualifications, so we no longer need these rules. Our rules covering reviews and appeals in these qualifications remain in force.
3. We have published new versions of our qualification-level 'Conditions for reformed and legacy GCSEs, AS and A levels'. These new versions simplify our rules by removing transitional arrangements that are no longer in force.

We have also published a new version of our '[Specifications in relation to the reasonable adjustment of general qualifications](#)'. This updates the document to reflect changes made by the '[Equality Act 2010 \(General Qualifications Bodies\) \(Appropriate Regulator and Relevant Qualifications\) \(Amendment\) \(England\) Regulations 2017](#)'.

[News story: Government welcomes proposals outlined by the Takeover Panel](#)

Business Secretary Greg Clark has welcomed proposals outlined today by the Takeover Panel, the independent body responsible for issuing and administering the Takeover Code. A consultation is seeking views on important reforms to the way takeovers operate in the UK.

Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Greg Clark, said:

One of Britain's biggest assets in competing in the global economy is our deserved reputation for being a dependable and confident place in which to do business.

The Takeover Panel is a respected and important part of this regime and the Government welcomes the valuable changes it is proposing.

They will require bidders to make earlier and fuller disclosure of their plans for the target company, including its research and development, location of HQ, and the composition and skills of its workforce; and give companies subject to a bid more time to prepare their response.

This autumn the Business Secretary will be publishing proposals that address the national security concerns that can arise from foreign investment. These will set out further measures to safeguard national security, while ensuring the UK remains a global champion of free trade and investment.

Notes to editor:

- Takeovers of publicly listed companies in the UK must abide by the Takeover Code, which sets out an orderly framework for how takeovers must be conducted.
- The Takeover Panel is an independent body which issues and administers the Takeover Code, and supervises and regulates takeovers. Its principal objective is to ensure fair treatment for all shareholders in takeover bids.
- The Takeover Panel's [consultation](#) will run for 6 weeks
- The Code Committee is proposing changes to the Code which would require:
 1. bidders to be more specific in their plans for a target company. This would include making statements of intention regarding: the company's research and development, the balance of skills and functions of the company's employees, and the location of the company's headquarters;
 2. statements of intention to be made at the time of a bidder's announcement of its firm intention to make an offer;
 3. bidders to not publish an offer document for 14 days from the announcement of their intention to make an offer without the consent of the board of the target company; and
 4. companies to publish reports on their compliance with the plans they announced during the course of an offer.

[News story: Mundell: Leaving the EU will transform global trade](#)

In a speech during a trade visit at the Diplomatic Academy, attended by senior members of the Paraguayan government, Mr Mundell focused on strengthening ties between Scotland and Paraguay, and the future of international trade as we leave the EU. He also spoke, on the third anniversary of the 2014 independence vote, about Scottish politics and working with the Scottish Government on Brexit.

On international trade, Mr Mundell said:

“Both our countries are very different now than they were 20 years ago. We find ourselves in a very different world. Amid all the change around us, it is encouraging that our relationship has strengthened in the last few years.

“This includes the promotion and protection of around \$120 million worth of British investments in the Paraguayan economy. But there is much more we can do. So it mustn’t be another twenty years.

“I see my visit here this week as the start of a stronger, closer relationship. This is part of a fundamental step-change in the UK’s global trade policy. Looking at our global trade policy, leaving the EU will be transformative.

“Of course, a significant part of the trade we currently do is underpinned by trade deals we are a part of through our membership with the EU. We are taking a sensible, pragmatic approach to these deals. That is why we will continue to support the EU’s trade agenda, including continued support for the ongoing negotiations of the EU-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement. As we leave the EU, we look forward to building upon that progress with Paraguay and the other Mercosur members.”

Reflecting on 20 years of devolution, Mr Mundell said:

“We need to pull together at home. We need to be ready for Brexit.

“Our two countries have changed over the past 20 years. In the UK, one of the biggest changes has been to devolve power closer to the people and to create a parliament in Scotland’s capital, Edinburgh, and legislative assemblies for Wales, in Cardiff, and Northern Ireland, in Belfast.

“When our Lord President of the Council visited Paraguay in 1996, they did not exist. Now, a UK without them is unimaginable.

“Last week we celebrated the 20th anniversary of a referendum in Scotland when the people voted overwhelmingly in favour of creating a parliament. It means that in Scotland we are at the heart of a strong, secure UK while having the ability to take different decisions, specific to Scotland’s needs and priorities, in devolved areas.

“This powerful feeling that we enjoy the best of the both worlds carried the day in 2014 when the Nationalist government in Edinburgh held a referendum on Scottish independence. Their proposal to take Scotland out of the UK was firmly rejected.

“Devolution – not independence – is the clear and settled will of the Scottish people and its achievements over the past 20 years have been considerable.

Mr Mundell stated the need for common UK-wide frameworks:

“For more than 40 years, as members of the EU, we have taken a common approach, shared by all Member States, to a wide range of policy areas. This has ensured consistency within the UK, even after the devolution of powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. A common UK-wide approach to many policy areas was built in to the devolution settlements.

“The question we need to answer now as we leave the EU is this: Where do we need to retain a UK-wide approach? And where can power returning from Brussels be transferred direct to the Scottish Parliament and other devolved institutions?

“We want to find common sense answers to these questions. For us, that will mean maintaining common, UK-wide frameworks in some areas in order to protect one of our biggest assets, our UK internal market. I am not prepared to see barriers emerge to trade within the UK, which would be extremely damaging for Scottish firms and for business across the UK.

“It is also essential that we safeguard our ability to enter into and implement trade deals or other international obligations. That is what we are talking about when we say we need common frameworks. But equally, we are clear that we will devolve powers unless there is a reason not to.

“The result will be a Scottish Parliament more powerful than it is today – indeed more powerful than it has ever been.□”

He spoke of working with the Scottish Government on Brexit issues and that independence is not the answer:

“Behind the scenes, that work has been happening and I am pleased to report we are making progress. But frankly, up to now, private progress has been overshadowed by public rhetoric.

“We have been accused by the Nationalist government in Edinburgh of a ‘power grab,’ of using our exit from the EU as an opportunity to centralise power at Westminster. That is simply not the case. Our record demonstrates our commitment to devolution.

“As a former MSP I want to see the Scottish Parliament strengthened and that is what will happen as we leave the EU. But I’m equally clear I want to see devolution delivered in a way that strengthens our United Kingdom – not undermines it. And this, sadly, goes to the heart of the matter.

“The fact is, until the recent election in June, the Brexit debate in Scotland was deliberately conflated with the question of Scottish independence.

“Despite the passage of only three short years – and despite the decisive result – the Scottish National Party – sought to use Brexit to re-open the issue that divided our country so badly.

“Their attempt was roundly rejected in the recent general election so we now need the issues to be de-coupled for good. The First Minister Nicola Sturgeon could put that to bed once and for all by ruling out a second independence referendum at her conference this autumn, and I hope she does.

“But whether or not she goes that far, I was heartened by her commitment in her Programme for Government to put the day job back front and centre. That is what people in Scotland asked for in June, and that is what they deserve.

“I look forward to the Autumn heralding the start of a more mature approach – where public rhetoric on all sides reflects the serious and constructive work achieved in private.”

He summed up his hopes for a stronger relationship between Scotland, the UK and Paraguay – and in particular his hopes for the whisky industry:

“Around half of the UK’s exports to Paraguay come from Scotland – mainly in the form of Scotch Whisky. I understand that this has been rising steadily over the years.

“This is welcome, of course. But twenty years ago, we were exporting three times as much Scotch Whisky to Paraguay as we are now. This is something I want to see turned around in the coming years, and which I see as a real Scottish opportunity. And trust me, as a connoisseur of Scotch whisky, a breakthrough in whisky exports will be for your enjoyment as much as ours.

“Scotch is a big deal here in South America, with the Scotch Whisky Association reporting sales of over £200 million. Scotland’s biggest export is being enjoyed by millions, from Colombia to Argentina, and from Brazil to Chile.

“South America is a continent of opportunity, a marketplace of 400 million people, and home to several growing economies, including Paraguay. As these economies grow, I am certain Scottish companies will be at the forefront of this. In agriculture, education, energy, food and drink, and financial services.

“Scotland’s skills, products and services are highly regarded globally, and we can build on that as we strike ambitious new trade deals and build relationships around the world. I am delighted to be here to bang the drum for businesses in Scotland and across the whole of the United Kingdom.

“I’ll not pretend that we don’t face challenges. We face tough negotiations with our EU partners to secure the right Brexit deal for the UK. Within the UK we must bring powers back from Brussels in a way that respects and strengthens the devolution of decision-making to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

“We must show an adventurous new spirit to reach out to the rest of the world and strike trade agreements that will benefit us all. We want to forge new partnerships and – as I sincerely hope my visit to Paraguay demonstrates – deepen ties with old friends.

“But as I hope I’ve shown, we approach all this with clear principles and a real commitment to work with others.”

Speech: UK Statement to the 61st General Conference of the IAEA

Madame President, Excellencies, and distinguished guests,

The United Kingdom associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Estonia on behalf of the European Union.

I would like to congratulate you, Madame President, on your election as President of the 61st General Conference, and thank the IAEA for its hard work in organising this event.

I would also like to express the gratitude of the United Kingdom for the leadership of Director General Amano, and thank him for his distinguished service during his second term in office. The UK looks forward to continuing our collaboration with him and the Agency to secure the future of civil nuclear energy and applications.

The United Kingdom welcomes the application for membership of the Agency by Grenada.

UK priorities

Madame President,

Following the government’s announcement of its intention to leave the Euratom Treaty, I would like to affirm the UK’s continuing strong support for the civil nuclear industry, for the highest standards of nuclear safety, security and safeguards, for the development of peaceful applications of nuclear technology, and for the IAEA’s central role in achieving these goals.

In that spirit, I would like to highlight some of the UK’s key objectives for the year ahead:

- To continue our commitment to civil nuclear energy both in the UK and internationally;
- To maintain robust nuclear safety, security, emergency preparedness and response, and safeguards regimes, and support their implementation; and,
- To promote the peaceful uses of new and existing civil nuclear technologies around the world, while ensuring an effective international nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Mdm President, before I discuss in detail the UK's objectives, I would like to make a statement on recent developments in North Korea.

The UK calls again on North Korea to halt its nuclear and missile development programme. The recent nuclear weapon test is reckless and poses an unacceptable further threat to international peace and security. The international community has universally condemned this test and must come together to continue to increase the pressure on North Korea's leaders to stop their destabilising actions. North Korea must resume compliance with its safeguards agreement and cooperation with the Agency, and abandon its nuclear programme in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

Civil Nuclear in the UK and Internationally

Madame President,

Nuclear currently provides around 25% of the UK's electricity needs. In the coming decades many of our existing plants will reach the end of their operational lives, while the demand for low-carbon energy increases. New nuclear will have a key role to play in the years ahead, and there are many opportunities to be found in this sector in the UK.

Hinkley Point C, our first new nuclear plant for over 20 years, will provide 3.2 gigawatts of secure, low-carbon electricity for 60 years, meeting around 7% of the UK's energy needs. EDF have made excellent progress; in March this year the first concrete was poured for the power station galleries. The first reactor is due to come online in 2025, and the second the following year.

We are committed to maintaining the UK's status as a world leader in nuclear research and development, and to sustaining and developing our existing international collaboration in this field. We will maintain and build on our world-leading fusion expertise, and seek continued participation in international fusion projects such as the Joint European Torus (JET) project at Culham, and the ITER project in France. Furthermore, we recognise the potential of Small Modular Reactors for producing low-carbon energy, whether small versions of conventional technologies, or next generation reactors.

The UK remains open for business, and ideally placed to continue supporting opportunities across the civil nuclear fuel cycle.

Safety & Security

Madame President,

Safety

The UK remains proactive and transparent in fulfilling our obligations, and sharing expertise, to strengthen nuclear safety and radioactive waste management. We are an active Contracting Party to the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) and the Joint Convention, and look forward to engaging fully

with the Joint Convention process next year. We are pleased that this year's CNS Review Meeting had the highest participation levels to date, and identified a number of cross cutting safety issues, which should be tackled as a priority by Member States, supported by the IAEA.

In April we welcomed an Operational Safety Review Team (OSART) follow-up mission to Sizewell B, to assess the facility's adherence to international standards of best practice, and have planned another mission to Torness in 2018. The UK government looks forward to receiving the findings from these missions and is committed to transparency on the outcomes, ensuring public confidence in our ability to safely deliver nuclear energy. We encourage all Member States to host OSART missions.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

The government is committed to maintaining the highest standards of emergency preparedness and response arrangements. The UK is reflecting the latest standards from Euratom and the IAEA in our domestic regime, as part of our commitment to continuous improvement.

Security

The UK strongly supports the central role of the IAEA in promoting robust nuclear security regimes and assisting in their implementation. We contributed a further £8.5m this year to the Nuclear Security Fund in support of these activities, and UK experts have supported International Physical Protection Advisory Service (IPPAS) missions. We encourage other Member States to provide funds and expertise to support the Agency's nuclear security work.

We congratulate the Agency on its successful Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Security last December, and look forward to the outputs of that Conference being applied, to help address current and emerging security challenges.

We continue work with the Agency to assist States in their capabilities to respond to nuclear security events, and to develop the effectiveness of the International Nuclear Security Advisory Service (INSServ). We encourage continued coordination between the Agency and other international bodies, such as the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT) and INTERPOL, to deliver training and exercises.

This year the UK Office for Nuclear Regulation launched a new regulatory framework: the Security Assessment Principles. This outcomes-based framework enables industry to design security solutions which align with their business needs. This will increase security competence within the civil nuclear sector, and place greater emphasis on protecting against emerging threats such as cyber.

Non-Proliferation Safeguards

Madame President,

The global safeguards regime is central to the peaceful use of nuclear technologies, and the UK supports the IAEA in its efforts to strengthen, and verify compliance with, safeguards obligations. The UK welcomes the continued development of State-level safeguards approaches.

We call on all States that have not yet done so to ratify Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols, to ensure their universalisation. As part of preparations for EU Exit, the UK is establishing a domestic nuclear safeguards regime which will deliver to existing Euratom standards. This will ensure that the IAEA retains its right to inspect all civil nuclear facilities, and will continue to receive all current safeguards reporting, ensuring that international verification of our safeguards activity continues to be robust.

Technical Cooperation

The UK remains a strong supporter of the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Programme. It is my pleasure to pledge more than €3.6m to the Technical Cooperation Fund, continuing our record of paying our voluntary contributions on time and in full, and we encourage other Member States to do so.

We congratulate the Secretariat on the success of the recent International Conference on the IAEA Technical Cooperation Programme, and welcome its continued implementation of the Results-Based Management approach. We encourage the Secretariat and Member States to assess project outcomes, and implement lessons learned.

Non-Proliferation Treaty

The UK is committed to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and we recognise the IAEA's vital role in support of the Treaty. The first Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in May this year put us on a sound footing for the remainder of the cycle, and we look forward to a constructive PrepCom in 2018. Iran

We welcome the Director General's reporting that confirms that Iran is adhering to its nuclear-related commitments as outlined in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. It is important for all parties to the Plan of Action to implement the agreement fully. Iran's continued co-operation with the Agency is required, and Member States should assist with continued financial support for the Agency's monitoring and verification activities.

Syria

In light of the Board's previous conclusion that Syria is in non-compliance with its Safeguards Agreement, we urge the Syrian regime to cooperate with the Agency to resolve all outstanding issues, including through concluding and implementing an Additional Protocol, as soon as possible.

IAEA Administration

Lastly, Madame President,

To meet the challenges of realising the global benefits of nuclear technology, it is important that the IAEA's resources are managed efficiently and sustainably to deliver its key priorities within existing funding envelopes. We also emphasise the importance of improving diversity in the Secretariat's staffing and senior appointments, and welcome efforts in this regard to date.

In closing Madame President, let me reiterate the UK's continued strong support for the vital work of the IAEA, in ensuring a safe and secure future for civil nuclear energy around the world, and maintaining an effective safeguards regime which underpins it. We look forward to its continued success, and that of this General Conference.

Thank you.