

News story: Pledge to protect Belfast Agreement and Common Travel Area in new position paper

The Government has today published a comprehensive paper which outlines the UK's position on addressing the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland and the land border with Ireland.

The position paper – which has been published ahead of the August negotiating round – states that the Government will protect the Common Travel Area (CTA) and associated rights for UK and Irish citizens, and put upholding the Belfast ('Good Friday') Agreement at the heart of its Exit negotiations.

The paper also puts forward proposals on avoiding a hard border on the movement of goods – making clear the UK's position that there should be no physical infrastructure at the border – and plans to preserve the wide range of institutional cooperation between Northern Ireland, Ireland and Great Britain including for the energy market.

Secretary of State for Exiting the EU David Davis said:

The UK and Ireland have been clear all along that we need to prioritise protecting the Belfast Agreement in these negotiations, and ensure the land border is as seamless as possible for people and businesses.

The proposals we outline in this paper do exactly that, and we're looking forward to seeing the EU's position paper on the Northern Ireland border.

In committing to keep the Common Travel Area, which has existed for nearly a century, we're making sure UK and Irish citizens will continue to be able to travel, live, work and study across both countries.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland James Brokenshire said:

This paper shows the Government's commitment to protecting and advancing the unique interests of Northern Ireland as we leave the EU. We are fully committed to the Belfast Agreement, and the principles, rights and institutions it established.

The paper provides flexible and imaginative ideas and demonstrates our desire to find a practical solution that recognises the unique economic, social and cultural context of the land border with Ireland, without creating any new obstacles to trade within the UK.

I believe it is possible to find a solution that works for the UK, for Ireland and for the EU – and, specifically, for Northern Ireland – and am determined to work to achieve that.

It is clear that there are many areas where the UK, Ireland and the rest of the EU have shared objectives. We have a lot to build on but need to work together intensively over the coming months.

The paper will say:

- Support for the Belfast Agreement should be written into the Withdrawal Agreement to reflect the absolute commitment of the UK Government, Irish Government, and the European Union, to the peace process.
- The Withdrawal Agreement should recognise that the people of Northern Ireland will continue to have – as set out in the Belfast Agreement – a birthright to both Irish and British citizenship. Any people in Northern Ireland who are Irish citizens will continue to benefit from the EU citizenship rights that flow from that.
- The Withdrawal Agreement should also recognise the ongoing status of the CTA and associated rights, a position that is entirely consistent with the EU's negotiating directives. This will mean there are no passport controls for UK and Irish citizens travelling within the CTA and no question of new immigration checks operating between Northern Ireland and Ireland.
- PEACE funding for reconciliation projects in border areas should be continued. We want to explore a potential future programme post-2020 with the Northern Ireland Executive and Irish Government.
- The UK and the EU should agree a common understanding of the principles of North-South and East-West cooperation in the initial phases of the dialogue, including key principles to test future models for border arrangements and energy. This includes no physical border infrastructure and maintaining the Single Electricity Market.

The policy document is the fourth formal position paper to be shared with the EU on matters related to the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

It will inform the ongoing dialogue between the UK and EU negotiating teams on the the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland and Ireland in light of the UK's withdrawal from, and new partnership with, the EU, as well as building on the proposals in the UK's customs paper published on Tuesday.

You can find the paper [here](#)

Press release: Over 3 million more people in work since 2010

According to the Office for National Statistics, the number of people in work is at the highest level since records began in 1971.

The record figures have been driven by increases in the number of people in secure work – over 75% of the increase in employment over the past 7 years has been in full-time work.

There are now 338,000 more people in work compared to this time last year.

Minister for Employment, Damian Hinds said:

These statistics show that record levels of people are in work across the country and earning a wage, which is great news.

Over 3 million more people are in work now than in 2010, with 7 in 10 of these roles being in higher skilled work.

Over the past year the rise in employment has been overwhelmingly driven by permanent and full-time jobs, as employers continue to invest in Britain's strong economy.

The task now is to build on this success through Jobcentre Plus and our employment programmes so that everybody can benefit from the opportunities being created.

Today's figures also show:

- the employment rate is at a record high of 75.1%, with 32.07 million people now in work – an increase of 338,000 on the year
- this year has been a strong one for employment growth with 247,000 more people now in work since January
- there are a near record 768,000 vacancies in the economy at any one time
- the female employment rate is at a record high of 70.5%, with over 15 million women in work
- youth unemployment is down by 394,000 since 2010

- there are more British people in work than ever before and around 9 in 10 people in jobs are UK nationals
- the UK employment rate is now the fourth highest in the European Union and 7 percentage points higher than the EU28 average

Separate figures out today [show 1.3 million claims have been made to Universal Credit](#). Of the 570,000 people now claiming Universal Credit, 39% are in work.

The government recently announced up to [£35 million of funding with devolution authorities across England for 6 new innovation employment pilots](#). These will help over 18,000 disadvantaged people into employment, and tackle long-term barriers to work and in-work progression.

Estimates of the claimant count are no longer included in the ONS statistical bulletin as they may now be providing a misleading representation of the UK labour market. For further information, read the [ONS statement explaining the decision \(23 February 2017\)](#).

Follow DWP on:

[Press release: Contract award – Operations Site Works](#)

Sellafield Ltd has awarded a contract to OneAIM, a joint venture comprising AmecFosterWheeler and Interserve.

The four-year Operations Site Works framework has a value up to £160m and will provide engineering support services to Sellafield's reprocessing plants and associated facilities.

[Press release: Contract award – Operations Site Works](#)

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News story: Civil news: 2018 contracts tender timetable

We are opening tenders for new 2018 civil legal aid contracts across all categories in mid-September 2017.

This follows publication of the government's policy consultation response to contract procurement proposals for the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme (HPCDS).

Face to face and CLA timetable

The tender process to procure new face to face and Civil Legal Advice (CLA) contracts will open in mid-September 2017.

The tender will be open for 8 weeks, closing in November.

We expect to notify bidders of the outcome of successful:

- face to face tenders in March 2018
- CLA tenders in May 2018

HPCDS timetable

The tender process for HPCDS contracts will follow on from a number of market engagement events which will run in August and September. Dates and locations will be confirmed shortly.

During August we will also engage the consultative bodies in a consultation on the proposed 2018 HPCDS contract.

The tender for HPCDS contracts will then open in October. It will run for 6 weeks before closing in November.

The LAA expects to notify bidders of the outcome of their tenders in June 2018.

Contract extensions

It will be necessary to extend current contracts beyond 31 March 2018 as follows:

- Some face to face and CLA telephone advice contracts – 5 month extension with new contracts starting 1 September 2018
- HPCDS schedules – 6 month extension with new contracts starting 1

October 2018

We will be writing to notify providers of the contract extensions in due course.

Further information

[HPCDS Policy consultation process – government response](#)

[Legal aid civil tender 2018](#) – information for organisations interested in delivering face to face civil, and/or specialist legal advice by telephone from 2018.