

The pound and the letter

Some said the pound would tumble more when we sent the letter.

Instead this week in the run up to its delivery the pound has remained fairly steady at around \$1.24 and Euro 1.15, above the lows of October last year when the pound reached \$1.20 and 1.10 Euros. The cut in UK interest rates last summer and the rises in US interest rates have of course led to a stronger dollar. The world's leading currency has also risen strongly against the yen and the Euro.

The pound hit an all time low against the Euro of 1.04 in December 2008 when we were firmly in the EU and is now 10% above that. It is also well above its all time low against the dollar.

Calling Conservatives: New public appointments announced. Housing Ombudsman – and more

Four years ago, the TaxPayers' Alliance reported that "in the last year, five times more Labour people were appointed to public bodies than Tories".

Since then, the figures have varied, and some Conservative members or supporters have been selected to fill important posts.

Nonetheless, it remains the case that, since it took office in 2010, our Party has punched beneath its weight when it comes to public appointments. One of the reasons seems to be that Tories simply don't apply in the same number as Labour supporters.

To help remedy this, every fortnight we put up links to some of the main public appointments vacancies, so that qualified Conservatives might be aware of the opportunities presented.

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Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy – [Small Business Commissioner](#)

"We are seeking to appoint the UK's first Small Business Commissioner. This is a new statutory role covering the UK and established under provisions within the Enterprise Act 2016. The Small Business Commissioner will enable small businesses to resolve payment disputes with their larger customers and

avoid future issues by encouraging a culture change in how businesses deal with each other. They will provide general advice and guidance to small businesses to prevent disputes occurring in the first place, direct them to existing support and help them resolve their complaints about payment issues.”

Time: Full-time.

Remuneration: £120,000-£130,000 per annum.

Closes: 27 March

UK Research & Innovation – [Board Members](#)

“The UKRI Board will be expected to support the set-up of the organisation, providing clear strategic direction and oversight, promoting the importance of UK Research and Innovation and supporting the senior leadership team of the organisation to embed new ways of working across UKRI... As well as the above requirements which would be expected for all UKRI Board Members, there are specific roles on the Board that will require additional expertise, and a larger time commitment to UKRI.”

Time: 20 days per annum.

Remuneration: £9,180 per annum, plus £459 per diem for extra days.

Closes: 31 March

Intellectual Property Office – [Chair of the Steering Board](#)

“The Intellectual Property Office Steering Board is responsible for advising the CEO and Minister on the overall direction and policies of the IPO. It ensures the IPO delivers on its strategic priorities and that resources are allocated effectively for their delivery. The Steering Board also regularly reviews the management and performance of the IPO and ensures high standards of corporate governance are maintained at all times. The role of Chair is an important one and demands effective strategic leadership of the Board and the ability to speak on its behalf. The Chair will work closely with the full-time Chief Executive, who is the IPO’s Accounting Officer.”

Time: 22 days per annum.

Remuneration: £450 per diem up to £10,000 per annum, plus “reasonable expenses”.

Closes: 31 March

UK Hydrographics Office – [Independent Non-Executive Director \(Digital\)](#)

“The UKHO Board meets regularly to review business performance and progress, ensure good governance and to consider the strategy to move the business forward. Fellow non-executive board members bring a variety of experiences and this appointment complements that range of skills. You will provide expertise to consider and challenge the technological information and knowledge management aspects of our complex, challenging and niche business. The navigation market is undergoing major changes to its international regulatory model, the global maritime economy and the level of competition in provision of data is escalating.”

Time: 30 days per annum.

Remuneration: £18,000 per annum plus expenses.

Closes: 31 March

Independent Monitoring Board – [National Chair](#)

“We are looking for an outstanding individual to lead the IMB operation through a period of internal reform and change; and at a time when strengthened independent scrutiny is an important part of the Government’s prison safety and reform programme.

The recent White Paper on Prison Safety and Reform set out plans to ‘strengthen the governance arrangements and accountability for IMBs, to support them in providing high quality scrutiny’ and the successful candidate will work closely with the Deputy Director IMB Secretariat lead to put the new governance arrangements and processes in place.”

Time: Eight days per month.

Remuneration: £400 per diem plus expenses.

Closes: 03 April

Central Arbitration Committee – [Chair](#)

“The CAC is an independent statutory authority with specific functions relating to trade unions and employers. The most significant function of the CAC is adjudicating on the recognition and de-recognition of trade unions for collective bargaining in the workplace. This is carried out by applying the underpinning UK trade union recognition legislation when considering a union’s application for collective bargaining in a workplace, whilst seeking agreement between a union and the employer where possible. The incoming Chair will also set the strategic direction of the CAC by monitoring developments in employment law, reviewing the CAC’s case work and its performance, and identifying risks and succession planning.”

Time: One day per week.

Remuneration: £25,357 per annum (full-time equivalent), annual increases.

Closes: 10 April

Marine Management Organisation – [Chair](#)

“The non-executive Chair of the MMO will lead the Board, set the overall strategic operational direction of the MMO, ensure good governance and with the Board, hold the Executive to account. The Chair will be responsible for: providing effective leadership and strategic direction to develop a cohesive and focused Board which recognises the need to work collaboratively with the Defra group, wider Government, other delivery bodies and stakeholders to deliver Government objectives effectively and efficiently...”

Time: Eight days per month.

Remuneration: £40,459 per annum.

Closes: 18 April

Department for Communities and Local Government – [Housing Ombudsman](#)

“The Housing Ombudsman has responsibility for investigating complaints against social landlords in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Scheme. Housing is an important part of everyone’s lives and issues relating to our homes can have a huge emotional impact. The Housing Ombudsman plays an important role in ensuring the fair resolution of disputes, aiming to resolve problems quickly and efficiently. Rented housing plays a vital role in the nation’s housing and we are keen to see that tenants experience good standards of service regardless of whether their landlord is a local authority, housing association or private landlord.”

Time: Full time.

Remuneration: Up to £120,000 per annum.

Closes: 23 April

[Newslinks for Wednesday 29th March 2017](#)

Brexit Day 1) May signed the letter yesterday. Today we begin to leave



“Shortly after 4.30pm yesterday, Mrs May signed a letter notifying the European Council of Britain’s intention to leave the EU. Once the letter is handed over today, two years of talks will begin on the terms of withdrawal allowed under Article 50 of the Lisbon treaty. Mrs May sat in the cabinet room at Downing Street beneath a portrait of Sir Robert Walpole, the first prime minister, as she signed...The prime minister will address the cabinet at 8am today before travelling to the Commons to outline her negotiating strategy. Last night she began a diplomatic charm offensive to lay the ground for what allies admit will be gruelling and often fractious talks.” – [The Times \(£\)](#)

Editorials:

- A “golden chance” to reform the state – [Daily Telegraph](#)
- This represents more than Britain’s “biggest diplomatic challenge” – [The Times \(£\)](#)
- We are “barking on a fraught and difficult course” – [Guardian](#)
- This is the “most momentous day in modern British history” – [The Sun](#)

Comment:

- Hail, festal day! – Jacob Rees Mogg, [Daily Telegraph](#)
- Happy Article 50! – Quentin Letts, [Daily Mail](#)
- The job is done – Douglas Carswell, [The Sun](#)
- What I imagine the letter said – Tom Peck, [Independent](#)
- Voters should get the last word – Tim Farron, [Guardian](#)
- The time frame is “unrealistic” – Gina Miller, [Independent](#)
- The choice we face – Gordon Brown, [FT](#)
- There’s “nothing to fear” – Ashley Fox, [Daily Express](#)

>Today: ToryDiary: [A truly historic moment. Today we start the process of leaving the EU.](#)

Brexit Day 2) May to talk of “fierce determination” to get best deal

“Theresa May will call on Britons to put their Brexit disagreements behind them and join forces on the “momentous journey” to freedom from the European Union. On the day she formally sets Brexit in motion by triggering Article 50, the Prime Minister will lay out her “fierce determination” to get the right deal for “every single person in this country”. On Tuesday night, with a Union flag by her side and beneath a portrait of Robert Walpole, Britain’s first prime minister, Mrs May sat at the Cabinet table and signed the historic letter to give notice of Britain’s decision to leave the EU. On Wednesday it will be hand-delivered to Donald Tusk, president of the European Council, and when he opens it, the clock will start ticking on two years of negotiations to agree the terms of Britain’s withdrawal.”

>Today: MPs etc: [May’s Article 50 statement: “Now that the decision has been made to leave the EU, it is time to come together.”](#)

Brexit Day 3) On addressing Commons she will “aim to strike a note of reconciliation”



“Theresa May will call on the British people to unite as she triggers article 50, beginning a two-year process that will see the UK leave the European Union and sever a political relationship that has lasted 44 years... May will aim to strike a note of reconciliation when she addresses the Commons, claiming this is the time for Brexiters and remainers to “come together” after holding an early morning meeting of her cabinet. “When I sit around the negotiating table in the months ahead, I will represent every person in the whole United Kingdom – young and old, rich and poor, city, town, country and all the villages and hamlets in between. And yes, those EU nationals who have made this country their home,” she will say.” – [Guardian](#)

- She says “it’s time to come together” – [The Sun](#)

- Remainers must accept this is it – Raphael Behr, [Guardian](#)

Brexit Day 4) She speaks of commitment to EU nationals

“Theresa May has vowed to represent all sections of the country – including EU nationals – as she triggers Article 50 and begins an arduous two-year negotiation to sever ties to Brussels.... “When I sit around the negotiating table in the months ahead, I will represent every person in the whole United Kingdom – young and old, rich and poor, city, town, country and all the villages and hamlets in between,” she said. “And yes, those EU nationals who have made this country their home.” – [Independent](#)

- Barnier hopes to get agreement on residency rights by end of year – [Guardian](#)

Brexit Day 5) Dominic Raab: We will prepare for all outcomes



“Today, Britain begins negotiations to leave the EU. We start with economic self-confidence and political ambition. But, the first year will be hard going. The EU didn’t want us to leave, and Brussels has other things on its mind. To give ourselves the strongest chance of the best deal, we need to be patient, constructive and big-hearted – without blinking. ... I appreciate some will be anxious during the process. By definition, negotiations involve uncertainty. But, outside the Westminster village, polls show the public strongly support this vision. A recent National Centre for Social Research study found 88 per cent of people support our free trade strategy, while 68 per cent want to end open-door immigration – including 58 per cent of Remain voters.” – [Daily Telegraph](#)

- Heseltine, Mandelson, and Cable call for May to drop “no deal” option – [Independent](#)
- Wales stands to lose out – David Williamson, [Wales Online](#)

Brexit Day 6) Daniel Finkelstein: Here’s how to negotiate

“In 1912, with Theodore Roosevelt in the middle of a battle to return as president of the United States, his campaign manager realised that the picture of the candidate that adorned his literature had been reproduced without the permission of the photographer. If the man sought redress,

copyright law might allow him as much as \$3 million. Curtains for Teddy. So his manager thought carefully and sent a telegram... What Teddy Roosevelt's campaign manager understood, however, is that it's just as important to get inside the head of the people on the other side in a negotiation as it is to know what you want." – [The Times \(£\)](#)

>Today: Henry Newman in Comment: [Sequencing and money. The first big challenges to the Brexit negotiation.](#)

More Brexit

- Pro-leave MPs refuse to sign "negative" report – [FT](#)
- The process "continues to pitch senior political figures against each other" – [Guardian](#)
- Tory MP says "few dare to question" the Brexit orthodoxy – [Guardian](#)
- Farage says he'll emigrate if Brexit doesn't work out – [Independent](#)
- Remainers vow to fight on – [FT](#)
- We need to make concessions – [FT](#)

>Yesterday: ToryDiary: [The remains of Remain still don't understand Leave voters or Brexit – particularly on immigration](#)

May talks of "ambitious" Gulf trade deal

The Prime Minister made the announcement as she prepares to trigger Article 50 tomorrow which will start two years of negotiations to leave the European Union (EU). She also welcomed a commitment of £5 billion of investment from Qatar as a "bold statement of continued confidence" in the British economy. Speaking at the UK-Qatar Business Investment Forum in Birmingham, she said a "global Britain" would be the "most committed and most passionate" advocate for free trade anywhere in the world. – [Daily Express](#)

Sturgeon wins Holyrood vote for independence rerun



"Nicola Sturgeon has won a key Holyrood vote on her plans for a second independence referendum, triggering accusations from UK ministers that her demands are premature. Sturgeon won by a 10-vote majority after the Scottish Greens backed her proposals to formally request from the UK government the powers to stage a fresh independence vote at around the time Britain leaves the EU, in spring 2019... The vote, which split the Scottish parliament cleanly between pro- and anti-independence parties, deepened the dispute between the two governments over both the need for and the timing of the vote." – [Guardian](#)

- It passed 69-59 – [Independent](#)
- After a three-hour argument – [Daily Express](#)
- This “sets up a clash” with Downing Street – [FT](#)
- Westminster “digs its heels in” – [Herald](#)

Comment:

- The relationship between May and Sturgeon – Alan Cochrane, [Daily Telegraph](#)
- Is it all about legs? – John Crace, [Guardian](#)
- Yes. But it’s been blown out of proportion – Sarah Vine, [Daily Mail](#)

Accounts Committee to say DfE is “jeopardising” schools with its “lack” of financial awareness

“The Department for Education is suffering a “collective delusion” about the financial pressures facing schools, MPs will suggest today. The department risks jeopardising the education of a generation of children and “does not seem to understand the pressures that schools are already under”, according to a report by the public accounts committee. Officials are poorly placed to act swiftly if cuts threaten quality, it adds. Schools will have to find efficiency and procurement savings of £3 billion by 2019-20 and the report, which is being published today, concludes that staffing levels will suffer.”
– [The Times \(£\)](#)

- DfE launches own property company – [FT](#)
- GCSE reforms criticised – [The Sun](#)

More Westminster

- Standards Committee calls for MPs to be treated as criminals if they don’t declare interests – [Daily Telegraph](#)
- Philip May: business-speak translator... – [Daily Telegraph](#)
- ...and Europhile? [FT](#)
- Feldman criticised for taking paid strategy role – [The Times \(£\)](#)
- Brokenshire says NI direct rule “still an option” – [Guardian](#)
- Committee criticises DfID for ending aid programmes – [Guardian](#)
- Emergency debate granted over disability cuts – [Independent](#)

>Today: Rebecca Lowe Coulson’s column: [Why government should focus on reducing poverty – not increasing equality](#)

Trump claiming presidential immunity in sexual contact case



“President Donald Trump’s lawyers will argue that he has presidential immunity from a defamation case brought by a former contestant on his reality TV show The Apprentice who accused him of unwanted sexual contact. The lawyers said in a state Supreme Court filing on Monday that they will formally ask for a dismissal or a suspension of the January claims by Summer Zervos, until he leaves office. They said the constitution provides immunity for Mr Trump from being sued in state court while he is president. The lawyers said their position is supported by a long line of US Supreme Court cases requiring courts to show deference to the president and his schedule.” – [Daily Telegraph](#)

- Krushner’s having a “crisis” too – David Usborne, [Independent](#)

News in Brief

Temporary Traffic Order – Riverside Esplanade and Riverside Drive



From Dundee City Council :

Dundee City Council proposes to make an Order under Section 14(1) of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 for the purpose of facilitating construction works. The Order is expected to be in force for 33 weeks from 2 April 2017. Its maximum duration in terms of the Act is eighteen months.

The effect of the Order is to prohibit temporarily all westbound vehicular traffic in the nearside lane of both Riverside Esplanade and Riverside Drive from a point 125 metres or thereby from the end of the Tay Road Bridge west off ramp for a distance of 410 metres or thereby to a point 75 metres or thereby along Riverside Drive.

After a period of 8 weeks lane closure will be reduced to an overall length of 290 metres or thereby. Lane closure will then progress for a further period of 10 weeks to allow external works to be completed along North boundary. Lane closure will then be removed for a period of 7 weeks. Lane closure (290 metres or thereby) will recommence to allow installation of precast to elevation on building B and completion of road at main entrance

for a period of 8 weeks.

No alternative route is required.

If you have any queries, please contact the Network Management Team, City Development Department, Dundee House, 50 North Lindsay Street, Dundee DD1 1LS or phone 433275.

Mainland probes Taiwanese for national security violation

A resident of Taiwan, Lee Ming-che, is under investigation for being suspected of endangering national security, a Chinese mainland official said Wednesday.

Developments of the investigation, in line with judicial process, will be disclosed in a timely fashion, Ma Xiaoguang, spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, told a press conference.

The mainland will protect the legitimate rights and interests of all residents of Taiwan who come to the mainland, as long as they abide by the regulations and laws, said Ma.