

Yemen urgently needs a ceasefire, a political settlement and food aid – Emily Thornberry

Emily Thornberry MP, Labour's Shadow Foreign Secretary, responding to the publication of a UN report showing that Yemen has moved closer to famine, said:

“Yemen urgently needs a ceasefire, a political settlement, and food aid. It does not need more bombing.

“Britain must stop selling billions of pounds' worth of arms to Saudi Arabia. This is only prolonging the conflict. We

are providing the means for the Saudis to continue a war which has been shown to include the aerial bombardment of farming land, fishing boats, and ports that provide access for desperately-needed humanitarian aid.”

Airspace Consultation

I recently wrote to the Transport Secretary to request a consultation event on airspace changes should be held in Wokingham. I have now received the enclosed reply from the Secretary of State.



Department
for Transport

Rt Hon John Redwood MP
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John

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Thank you for your letter of 9 February 2017, about the two consultations on airport capacity and airspace policy.

The rationale for the locations of consultation information events is derived from the Airports Commission's analysis of indicative flightpath data, which projected potential noise impacts of a new runway in 2030. From this we identified local authorities which either border the airport or whose land boundary would be wholly or partly within a 54 dB noise contour. We also included any Parliamentary constituencies on the same basis. This does not mean that people outside these areas are not affected by the impacts of expansion of Heathrow, but I believe we have used reasonable criteria to decide on the locations for the local events.

In addition to the local events, we are also planning to hold a programme of regional stakeholder conference-style events across the UK. For instance there is one in Reading on 12 April and we hope stakeholder groups across the region will register for and attend one of these events.

Further information on the consultation information events being held, including the times and locations of events and the content of the information boards displayed at the events, can be found at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/heathrow-airport-expansion#consultation-information-events>

I appreciate that you would have liked the Department to have held an event in your constituency, but you will recognise that the rationale for the locations of the events described above was necessary given the many factors that had to be considered, such as availability of suitable facilities within the consultation window, department resources, logistical considerations and accessibility of

the venues. However, leaving aside the events, I am content that all interested parties across the region and not just those that are close to the airport are nevertheless able to access the information and make an informed response to the consultation, and I would very much encourage them to do so.

W.L. best wish

Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT

Letter on National Insurance contributions (NICs) for the self-employed

I have received the enclosed letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, confirming that the proposed increase to National Insurance contributions (NICs) for the self-employed will no longer go ahead.



HM Treasury, 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ

15 March 2017

Dear Colleague

I am writing to clarify the Government's position with regard to the changes to National Insurance contributions (NICs) for the self-employed, announced in last week's Budget.

As I set out last Wednesday, the gap between benefits available to the self-employed and those in employment has closed significantly over the last few years – most notably by the introduction of the new State Pension in April 2016, worth an additional £1,800 to a self-employed person for each year of retirement. It remains our judgment that the current differences in benefit entitlement no longer justify the scale of difference in the level of total NICs paid in respect of employees and the self-employed.

Colleagues will be aware that there has been a sharp increase in self-employment over the last few years. Most commentators believe that at least part of the increase is driven by differences in tax treatment. HMRC estimates that the cost to the public finances of this trend is around £5bn this year alone and the parallel increase in incorporation will cost more than £6bn a year by the end of the Parliament. This represents a significant risk to the tax base and thus to the funding of our public services.

The measures I announced in the Budget sought to reflect more fairly the differences in entitlement in the contributions made by the self-employed and addresses the challenge of sustainability of the tax base. The Government continues to believe that this is the right approach.

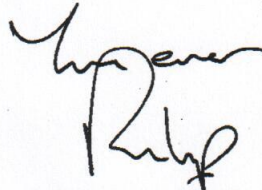
Since the Budget, however, there has been much comment on the question of commitments made in our 2015 manifesto. Ahead of Autumn Statement last year, the Prime Minister and I decided that, however difficult the fiscal challenges we face, the tax-lock and spending ring-fence commitments we have made for this Parliament should be honoured in full. I made this clear in the Autumn Statement speech. As far as National Insurance contributions are concerned, the locks were legislated for in the National Insurance contributions (Rate Ceilings) Act 2015. When that Bill was introduced, it was made clear that the lock would apply only to Class 1 contributions (employer and employee). The measures proposed in the Budget fall within the constraints set out by the tax-lock legislation and the spending ring-fences. However, in light of the debate over the last few days it is clear that compliance with the "legislative" test of the Manifesto commitment is not adequate.

It is very important both to me and to the Prime Minister that we are compliant not just with the letter, but also the spirit, of the commitments that were made. In light of what has emerged as a clear view among colleagues and a significant section of the public, I

have decided not to proceed with the Class 4 NIC measures set out in the Budget. There will be no increases in NICs rates in this Parliament. We will continue with the abolition of Class 2 NICs from April 2018. The cost of the changes I am announcing today will be funded by measures to be announced in the Autumn Budget.

I undertook in the Budget speech to consult over the summer on options to address the principal outstanding difference in benefit entitlement between employed and self-employed: parental benefits. We now intend to widen this exercise to look at the other areas of difference in treatment, alongside the Government's consideration of the forthcoming report by Matthew Taylor, CEO of the RSA, on the implication of different ways of working for employment rights. Once we have completed these pieces of work, the Government will set out how it intends to take forward, and fund, reforms in this area.

I plan to make a statement in the House later today.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Hammond', written in a cursive style.

PHILIP HAMMOND

Press release: Public consultation for Rivenhall incinerator

Two drop-in sessions are being held in Coggeshall and Silver End to explain and discuss a proposal for an Integrated Waste Management Facility on the former Rivenhall Airfield site in Essex.

Following the Environment Agency's decision in December 2016 to refuse Gent Fairhead & Co. Ltd's application for an Environmental Permit to operate the facility, they have submitted a new application.

Environment Agency staff will be at public drop-ins to discuss the proposals with people and explain their role in permitting and regulating this type of facility. The sessions are:

Monday 20 March, 2pm to 7pm, Silver End Village Hall, Broadway, Silver End CM8 3RQ

Friday 31 March, 2pm to 7pm, Christ Church, Stoneham Street, Coggeshall C06 1UH

They will explain what will happen and how people can be involved during the consultation and decision-making process. Officers from Essex County Council will also be on hand to answer planning-related questions.

An Environmental Permit from the Environment Agency needs to be in place before the plant can start operating. Environmental Permits contain specific conditions and emission limits that must be complied with while the plant is operating.

The Environment Agency's role is to consider the environmental impacts the plant could have on human health, air, water, land, habitats and species of animals and plants. It also looks at noise levels, energy efficiency and the sustainability of the plant.

The first application was refused last year because the company had failed to demonstrate that the design of the waste plant would use Best Available Techniques (BAT) to reduce emissions and their impact on the environment. In particular, the company failed to demonstrate that the proposed incinerator stack height was BAT.

Frank Saunders, Team Leader at the Environment Agency said:

Gent Fairhead & Co. Ltd's revised proposals include a change to the height of the incinerator stack. We encourage local people to come to the drop-ins to find out more about the latest proposals. We'd like to hear their thoughts and concerns to make sure we consider

local representations in our decision making process.

The consultation period on this permit application started on 9 March and closes on 13 April 2017.

At the drop-ins people will be able to see the full application and make comments on it.

Further copies of the application (EPR/FP3335YU/A001) will be available at the Environment Agency offices, Threshelfords Business Park, Inworth Road, Kelvedon C05 9SE, as well as the public libraries in Coggeshall and Kelvedon.

It is also available on GOV.UK:[here](#)

Comments on the permit application should be sent to the Environment Agency's National Permitting Service in Sheffield at either the postal or email address below, or submitted online [here](#)

Environment Agency, Permitting and Support Centre, Land Team, Quadrant 2, 99 Parkway Avenue
Sheffield S9 4WF

Or by email: pscpublicresponse@environment-agency.gov.uk

[BCC: pause for thought on NICs is welcome](#)

Commenting on the statement by Chancellor Philip Hammond pausing the rise in National Insurance Contributions for the self-employed, Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

“The NICs rise, together with the cut to dividend tax-free allowances, was not viewed favourably by entrepreneurs – so this move and pause for thought are welcome. It would be far better to look at business and employment taxation in the round, to ensure that our tax system is competitive and equitable.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world.

For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

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