

Angela Rayner responds to Social Mobility Commission report

Angela

Rayner MP, Labour's Shadow Education Secretary, commenting on the Social Mobility Commission's report out today, said:

"The Social Mobility Commission is only the latest expert body to explicitly call for the Government to abandon their plans to increase selection in our schools.

It does nothing to help most children do better in life. The Government should

finally start listening to all the evidence against new grammars and concentrate instead on helping all of our children to reach their full potential, not just the few.

"Funding cuts will make the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children even wider at a time when inequality is steadily worsening. With the Budget next week, the Chancellor has the chance to put the

needs of all our children first and give education the money it needs."

CPC punishes officials for poor leadership

The discipline watchdog of the Communist Party of China (CPC) exposed six cases involving officials who were held accountable for their poor leadership.

The officials were punished for poor fulfillment of their main responsibilities in strict Party governance and ineffective supervision of disciplinary violation by their subordinates, according to a circular published on the website of the CPC Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) on Sunday.

The cases involved gambling, poor investigation in handling public complaints, the illegal general election of a village-level Party committee and lavish wedding banquets, in provinces of Hunan, Hubei, Shandong, Shanxi, Guangdong and Liaoning, it said.

In July 2016, the CCDI issued a regulation to hold CPC officials accountable for poor leadership, targeting leaders of Party committees and discipline

inspection committees at all levels.

The circular urged Party committees at all levels to comprehensively deepen strict Party governance and make good use of the accountability mechanism in Party building.

Discipline inspection committees at all levels should perform the duties of supervision, and officials who fail to perform their duty should be held accountable.

[Free health and safety seminar programme at The Cleaning Show 2017](#)

The Health and Safety Executive will be running a morning of free seminars at the cleaning show this year to help employers protect their workforce and reduce costs attributed to managing staff absence.

Topics to be covered include:

- working at height
- preventing slips and trips
- occupation respiratory health
- MSDs
- vulnerable workers

For more information and to book your place go to [The Cleaning Show 2017](#)

[News story: Defence Secretary announces world class innovation panel](#)

Defence Innovation Advisory Panel

Addressing engineering students, academics, and apprentices, Sir Michael Fallon announced three members of the new Defence Innovation Advisory Panel. The Panel will be charged with driving forward the MOD's Innovation Initiative, which aims to encourage imagination, ingenuity and entrepreneurship, in pursuit of maintaining a military advantage in the future.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Backed by an £800M innovation fund, we want to transform defence and work with small firms, academics and others to find solutions to the threats to our security.

This panel of world class innovators will bring their drive and expert insights to the vital task of keeping the UK ahead of our adversaries and boosting our prosperity.

Major Tim Peake, the first British astronaut at the European Space Agency, is one of the panel members to be announced. Businessman and former Chairman of McLaren Technology Group Ron Dennis, Innovate UK's Chief Executive Ruth Mckernan, and Robert Hannigan, retiring GCHQ Director, all join him.

Major Tim Peake said:

I'm delighted to be part of the Ministry of Defence's drive to place innovation at the heart of everything they do, and to bring my experience to the effort to improve the technology, organisation, and culture that keep the UK safe.

Ron Dennis said:

There can be nothing more important than our national security, and I'm enthusiastic to be among the first of those named to this world-class Panel, who have joined MOD to spearhead their efforts to innovate across the organisation, from technology to culture – challenging the status quo, staying ahead of the curve through change and innovation.

Innovative Unmanned Technology

During his speech, the Defence Secretary also announced the launch of a two year £8 million second phase of innovative research and development, exploring the future of unmanned air systems. Developed in partnership with Leonardo Helicopters, the Rotary Wing Unmanned Air Systems (RWUAS) Capability Concept Demonstrator will be a vital tool in discovering how unmanned air systems can support our personnel on the battlefield of the future by developing new concepts and technologies.

The jointly funded programme will utilise the specialist engineering skill base at Leonardo Helicopters by exploring emerging technologies and methods. The announcement comes after the Royal Navy led 'Unmanned Warrior' in 2016: a major international demonstration of autonomous systems which could transform the way in which the Armed Forces of the future help keep Britain safe.

SMEs at the heart of innovation

SMEs are at the heart of the Innovation Initiative, and earlier on Monday, the Defence Secretary visited two world-leading Oxfordshire-based small and medium enterprises. The Defence Secretary took part in an Innovation Roundtable with industry representatives, academics, think tanks, and senior policy-makers. The goal is to work more effectively with businesses and academics across the UK – and particularly with SMEs which might not normally think of themselves as Defence suppliers.

Sir Michael Fallon discussed the innovative collaboration between Reaction Engines, the MOD, and suppliers while touring the cutting-edge facility. The company is a global leader in aerospace propulsion and is currently designing and developing technologies for the next generation of air and space vehicles, with the potential to enable hypersonic flight and transform space access.

He also toured the Animal Dynamics facility, viewing their Skeeter intelligence-gathering micro-drone, which has tiny wings inspired by the dragonfly. Animal Dynamics' innovative research is focused on so-called "biomimetic technology": producing drones based on natural forms. The MOD has placed contracts with Animal Dynamics worth up to £1.5M since June 2015 as part of its Disruptive Capabilities initiative. The drone is part of a wider, innovative MOD Disruptive Capability project, which aims to significantly improve intelligence gathering in complex urban environments.

The infographic is divided into two main sections. The left section features three views of the drone: a front view showing a 40-degree angle, a side view, and a top view showing 45-degree wing flaps and a 15-degree tail angle. Callout boxes describe the multifunctional composite structure, cutting edge sensing tech, and flexible dragonfly-inspired flapping wings. The right section shows a hand holding a scale model of the drone, followed by the title 'SKEETER' and 'Scale model representation'. Below this, project details are listed: Project: Dragonfly Unmanned Aerial Vehicle; Requirement: Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance; Operation: Multiple environments, including Complex Urban Environments; Innovation: Bio-inspiration, Disruptive Capabilities; Development: Developed for the MOD under the STRATUS Project by Animal Dynamics, UK SME.

Front View 40°

Multifunctional composite structure with embedded smart electronics enabling advanced autonomous flight modes

Cutting edge sensing tech enables day/night intel gathering and high speed obstacle avoidance using bioprincipic design techniques

Side View

45° 45°

Flexible dragonfly-inspired flapping wings enable revolutionary flight performance

Top View 15°

SKEETER
Scale model representation

Project:
Dragonfly Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

Requirement:
Intelligence, Surveillance,
Reconnaissance

Operation:
Multiple environments, including
Complex Urban Environments

Innovation:
Bio-inspiration, Disruptive Capabilities

Development:
Developed for the MOD under the
STRATUS Project by Animal Dynamics,
UK SME

The Skeeter intelligence-gathering micro-drone manufactured by Animal Dynamics.

The Defence Secretary also visited the new Centre for Applied Superconductivity: a joint project between University of Oxford and local industrial partners and research centres that share an interest in the discovery and future applications of novel superconducting materials. These include improved MRI healthcare scanners and in new quantum technologies for sensors and meteorology. This direct engagement between the research community and commercial application is precisely the kind of dialogue the Innovation Initiative seeks to foster.

Chief Scientific Advisor

As part of Defence's drive to transform its culture, the role of the MOD's Chief Scientific Advisor has been expanded and is responsible for the MOD's commitment to spend 1.2% of its budget on science and technology. While in Oxford, the Defence Secretary announced that world-renowned scientist Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte has been appointed to lead the MOD's research and technology programme. As the MOD's Chief Scientific Advisor, Professor Durrant-Whyte will work across the UK and internationally to drive defence innovation, commission research, and use technology to keep our people safe in challenging environments.

[Police Scotland changes 'must not deplete the frontline'](#)

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27 Feb 2017



Frontline policing in Scotland must be protected amid a range of changes being proposed by the single force, the Scottish Conservatives have said.

Police Scotland unveiled its plan for the next decade today, including an acknowledgement that officer numbers would have to reduce.

This is despite a previous pledge by the SNP to retain 1000 extra police officers on Scotland's streets.

'2026: Serving a Changing Scotland' set out how the force will adapt over the next decade.

The report said there would be a £60 million black hole by the end of next year, a statistic that would endure "without the commencement of an effective

transformation plan”.

Workforce numbers would be protected in 2017/18, the report said, but no such commitment was in place for future years.

Police Scotland said “bureaucracy” was still one of the major internal challenges it faced, despite the single force being created to reduce such issues.

And the paper poured cold water on SNP claims that Scotland is safer now than it’s been in 40 years, pointing out “crime figures are not an accurate measure of demand”.

At the document’s launch, the Scottish Police Authority warned 400 fewer officers would be in place by 2020, and that hundreds were already filling back office duties.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:

“These are extremely stark warnings about the future of Police Scotland.

“It’s absolutely imperative these planned changes do not deplete the frontline of policing in Scotland.

“The SNP created the single force on the basis it would save money, be more efficient and ensure more time could be spent fighting crime.

“Instead, four years in, there’s a black hole of tens of millions of pounds, officer numbers are to be reduced and bureaucracy is as much an issue as ever.

“The Scottish Government has been in sole charge of justice for nearly a decade now, and these bleak warnings are a Result of its choices.

“We now need urgent assurances that any changes made to Police Scotland’s approach will not put public safety at risk.”

To see a copy of the report, visit:

https://consult.scotland.police.uk/consultation/2026/user_uploads/policing-2026-strategy-for-consultation.pdf
