

Government confirms commitment to preventing public institutions setting up their own international boycotts

- Public institutions, including local councils, will be prevented from setting up boycotts against countries such as Israel
- Government is clear that it will make foreign policy decisions, not local authorities
- Minister tells institutions to focus on their day job instead of boycotts which sow division and hatred

The move will prevent organisations, including local councils, from boycotting countries such as Israel.

It will make sure there is a coherent approach to foreign relations from all public institutions, guaranteeing they do not go beyond the Government's official foreign policy by implementing policies which undermine community cohesion.

Such policies have led to concerns about anti-Semitism being legitimised through actions such as Jewish films being censored and Jewish university societies being threatened with bans.

The Minister for the Cabinet Office, Oliver Dowden said:

Our public institutions should focus on their day job, not try to set foreign policy by making rules on which countries they will and won't do business with.

By stopping this unsanctioned activity we can get better value for taxpayers and put an end to boycotts that divide communities and sow hatred.

The commitment will prevent public institutions from creating independent sanctions and boycotts against:

- Foreign countries or those linked to them
- The sale of goods and services from foreign countries
- UK firms which trade with such countries

Both the Cabinet Office and Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government have previously published guidance against such boycotts. The new policy will provide for a firmer approach.

It is also a long-standing principle that there may be restrictions on taxpayer-funded public institutions that do not apply to private bodies. For

example, public bodies cannot engage in party political campaigning.

The Government will examine the appropriate mix of legislative and other measures to give effect to this policy over the coming Parliament.