

## Recording of the week: Montserrat Volcano Observatory

This week's selection comes from Emme Ledgerwood, Collaborative Doctoral Award student with the British Library's Oral History department and Leicester University. "I think great science comes from this natural curiosity" This recording for #EarthScienceWeek comes from Stephen Sparks, a volcanologist who describes how the Montserrat Volcano Observatory advised the government...

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## News story: Double win for Sellafield Ltd

The company was named 'Large Employer of the Year', while employee Laura Pugh took the title of 'Young Apprentice of the Year' at the annual ECITB awards event in London.

Steve Bostock, Site Director for Sellafield Ltd attended the ceremony. He said:

For the company to receive an award like this during a year of such unprecedented change is testament to the people driving forward the Sellafield clean-up mission.

Laura is a shining example of that, and to see her recognised as an outstanding role model for the next generation of engineers, is fantastic.

Not only has she excelled in her training and subsequent employment, she goes above and beyond to support colleagues and promote the value of apprenticeships.

The awards celebrate the brightest and best from the engineering construction industry, including those delivering world class education and training.

Steve added:

We are home to some of the most complex challenges in the world, but have one of the most innovative and determined workforce and supply chains.

Although the mission at Sellafield is changing, engineering and construction skills will be needed for decades to come.

We are proud to be developing world class education and training to help create a pipeline of skills, building the UK's workforce of tomorrow.

Laura, aged 23 from Workington, was praised for her commitment to learning and her work to inspire younger people to pursue STEM subjects.

She said:

I was just happy to be nominated for an award as it meant that my hard work has been noticed, but I'm stunned to have won.

Balancing academic studies with work and STEM activities for four years was difficult at times, but I was keen to give it my best and I had great support from my mentor and managers.

Having completed an apprenticeship in electrical design, she is now an electrical and instrumentation designer at the nuclear site, while working towards a degree with the University of Cumbria.

Judges said Laura demonstrated excellent performance during her apprenticeship, commitment to her own personal development and a passion to raise the aspiration of local school students.

Last year Lydia Rowell took home the 'Women in Engineering' award, and the company continues to be praised for its impressive female apprentice intake.

Steve added; "We are extremely proud to have 42% female apprentices, the highest of any STEM employer in the UK, and trainees like Laura provide positive role models for women in the engineering profession."

Having completed her training in a portacabin on a construction site at Sellafield, Laura said:

Nuclear is obviously a male dominated industry, but I never felt like this was a barrier. I have been extremely supported by both males and females, including my colleagues, mentor and line manager.

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## News story: Science Minister signals hi-tech expansion for Culham

Science Minister Sam Gyimah announced today development of Culham during his visit to [Culham Science Centre](#).

The planned development – which is estimated to bring 200 new jobs – aims to cater for the increasing number of companies wanting to move to Culham. Currently, the existing on-site accommodation, which hosts approximately 60 tenants, including 20 start-ups, is full.

In his visit, Science Minister Gyimah also revealed further Government funding to extend UKAEA's Materials Research Facility to allow for increased lab space for conducting research on nuclear reactor materials. The Minister also welcomed a new £3.6m academic partnership with the US in order to make the most of transatlantic research talent. The collaboration between UKAEA and Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory will see UKAEA post-doctoral researchers undertake extended visits to Princeton to work on areas of common interest in fusion science.

Minister Gyimah addressed UKAEA employees during his visit, and underlined the government's commitment to fusion research post-Brexit.

He said:

From fusion energy, to software for driverless cars, to air-breathing rocket engines, this site is engineering some of the most exciting science in the world.

The UK is an innovation powerhouse and with science and tech experts moving here, thriving here and growing their businesses here, it's a vote of confidence in UK science industry. We are committed to attracting and retaining both homegrown and international talent and will keep supporting international collaboration as we tackle the grand challenges of tomorrow and build a Britain fit for the future.

Ian Chapman, UKAEA's CEO, said:

The Minister's announcement on site development is excellent news. It means we can establish Culham as a home for hi-tech business in fusion and adjacent sectors and reinforce Oxfordshire's reputation for world-leading science.

The visit was also an opportunity to show the Minister how UKAEA's new research facilities will help to get fusion energy on the grid. Fusion could be the ultimate low-carbon energy source, but commercialising it entails overcoming challenges in physics, materials science, engineering and robotics. Recent government support is enabling Culham and the UK to be right at the centre of this world-changing technology.

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## **News story: Windrush compensation scheme consultation extends**

Following a recommendation from Martin Forde QC, the independent adviser appointed to oversee the development of the scheme, the decision was made to extend the period of time that people have to respond. The consultation will now close on 16 November 2018.

Based on his engagement with community groups and the roadshows he is undertaking across the country, Martin Forde advised that it was clear people needed more time to respond.

The Home Secretary has committed to listening to the widest possible range of voices, including those affected and their families, community groups and specialist legal representatives and extending the consultation will ensure that this is possible.

In addition, the Home Secretary has announced that a framework will be developed to make individual payments ahead of the compensation scheme in urgent and exceptional cases.

Martin Forde QC said:

I have travelled around the country to seek the views of those affected and it became very clear to me that people need more time to engage with the consultation.

With that in mind, and on my advice, the consultation has been extended. This will help us get as many views as possible and make sure we can design an effective and fair compensation scheme.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

I've been clear that we must right the wrongs experienced by the Windrush generation and the compensation scheme is a key part of

that.

It is absolutely vital we get the scheme right and give everyone who wants to participate in the consultation the chance to input their views.

In the meantime, we will ensure that individual payments are made in urgent and exceptional cases

Following the consultation, the priority of the Home Secretary is to establish a compensation scheme which will start making payments as soon as possible.

There are already several measures and initiatives in place to help those of the Windrush generation who are concerned about benefits, housing or employment. A dedicated team for vulnerable people has been set up within the Windrush Taskforce, it has already assisted over 450 people where an urgent need for support or advice was identified.

In addition, a Fast-Track service with the Department for Work and Pensions has been established to arrange access to benefits; steps to secure accommodation with local authorities for those identified as homeless; and interim guidance to employers and landlords. An agreement with Citizens Advice has also been put in place to provide bespoke professional advice to anyone experiencing immediate financial problems.

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## **News story: Damian Hinds: Autonomy leads to progress in our schools**

The freedom and autonomy of the academies programme has driven innovation and standards have risen in our school system, the Education Secretary Damian Hinds said in a speech today (Thursday 11 October).

Speaking at the launch of the Confederation of School Trusts at the British Library in London, the Education Secretary pointed to the many successes of the academies system and the increasing number of schools making the positive choice to convert as examples of the benefits of backing school leaders.

Mr Hinds said that it is a “fundamental point” that heads and school leaders should have the freedom to make decisions in the best interests of their schools. This has seen:

- More than half a million children now studying in good or outstanding sponsored academies that typically replaced underperforming schools;

- The number of state-funded schools in academy trusts grow from around 3,200 in 2015 to around 6,200 this year – and receiving 600 applications to convert to an academy in the last 12 months; and
- Of the almost 1,400 multi-academy trusts, three quarters (76%) have between 1 to 5 schools, working together to share best practice.

[Building on the principles for a new, clearer school accountability system which Mr Hinds set out earlier in the year](#), the Education Secretary reiterated his commitment to holding MATs to account in a way that is transparent and fair. This will aim to give schools and parents easy access to vital information about a particular trust, and the performance of the sector as a whole.

The department is undertaking a listening period with multi-academy trust leaders, school heads and school leaders to help shape the system. This follows [the announcement to deliver even more transparency over academy finances](#), with academy accounts having to detail all staff earning over £100,000, declare contracts given to family or friends, and seek approval for all related-party transactions over £20,000 from next April.

The Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

It's when you give good people the power to make their own decisions that you unleash their creativity and allow them to drive improvements based on what they know works.

Today I want to re-make the case for freedom...for diversity...and for accountability in our school system...for going forwards not backwards, as we strive to achieve a world-class education for every child, whatever their background.

Trusts clearly have an increasingly important role in our system and we need to make sure our system of oversight and decision-making keeps up with this.

I want to make sure that schools and parents can easily access vital information about a particular trust, and the performance of the system as a whole.

That is why I am working with the sector to figure out how this will work. In particular I want to hear proposals from MAT and school leaders; your views are crucial.

The Education Secretary also backed the freedom of heads and school leaders to make decisions in the interests of staff and pupils – be it banning mobile phones or deciding on their marking policies.

Mr Hinds said:

We heard a couple of months ago how France would be banning mobile phones in schools. Please be in no doubt what I think about mobile phones.

I firmly believe that kids in schools should not be on their phones. I strongly support schools that ban phones.

But when people asked me if I was going to follow the example of France and impose a national ban – I said no.

Because that's autonomy in practice. Heads know best how to run their schools and achieve the objectives they want without any unintended consequences.

There are other areas where I want to proactively stress schools' autonomy.

Too often schools get told that my department or Ofsted expect them to follow the latest fads and fashions in the sector.

That's why Amanda Spielman, myself and others recently made a video stressing that schools are free to follow their own judgement when it comes to lesson plans, the data they collect, the marking policies.

In his speech at the National Association of Head Teachers' annual conference in Liverpool in May, the Education Secretary set out his vision for a clearer school accountability system. This included:

- replacing the current system of having both below the floor and coasting standards for performance; and
- emphasising that only an Ofsted Inadequate judgement will result in school forcibly being turned into an academy.

A consultation on these principles will be launched shortly.