

News story: Written Ministerial Statement: Media Matters

Having taken over as the Secretary of State with responsibility for media public interest cases I have reviewed the process regarding the proposed merger between 21st Century Fox (21CF) and Sky Plc (Sky). I am content that DCMS and the relevant parties have ensured a scrupulously clear, fair and transparent process and I can now therefore inform the House of the final decisions made by my predecessor as Secretary of State. These decisions were made in a quasi-judicial capacity.

On 5 June the previous Secretary of State made a statement to the House in which he set out his decision in relation to the proposed merger.

He announced that having considered the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) report, he agreed with their findings on the public interest grounds and their finding that undertakings to divest Sky News to The Walt Disney Company (Disney) or to an alternative suitable buyer could potentially remedy the public interest concerns identified.

Following the completion of discussions with the parties, on 19 June he published a consultation on the undertakings offered by 21CF along with new undertakings offered by Disney for the divestment of Sky News to Disney and several associated documents.

We received five responses to the consultation, which closed on 4 July. These responses will be published today on the DCMS website, along with the government's response to the consultation.

Having considered the responses to the consultation, the previous Secretary of State agreed with the parties a clarificatory change to Disney's undertakings and changes to the associated brand licensing agreement. In response to specific concerns raised by respondents, he also agreed that where appropriate the Secretary of State will consult with the CMA in relation to these undertakings and will publish the formal written advice given by the CMA. I am content to confirm this position.

The final version of the undertakings have been published along with the other relevant documents on the DCMS website.

The publication of the undertakings marks the final stage of the public interest consideration of this case. It is right that Ofcom, the CMA and my Department have taken such care in ensuring the bid is properly and effectively scrutinised. It is now a matter for the Sky shareholders to decide whether to accept 21CF's bid.

[Press release: Minister for the Middle East travels to the US and Saudi Arabia](#)

During his visit to Washington he will meet with senior US policymakers working on the Middle East and North Africa, including members of the House and Senate Foreign Affairs and Relations Committees. Mr Burt will also participate in a meeting with the House Foreign Affairs Committee alongside Ambassadors from Germany and France on Iran and wider Middle East issues.

In Riyadh, Mr Burt will meet with Ministers from the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Foreign Minister of Yemen.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Mr Burt said:

As the President of the United States makes his first official visit to the UK, my meetings in Washington are emblematic of the of the breadth and depth of the cooperation between our two countries, not least on Middle East and North Africa issues. Over the last few months we have worked together both bilaterally and through international organisations to address the situations in Syria and Yemen, our troops continue to fight together against the scourge of Daesh, and our aid organisations cooperate at every level.

In Riyadh I will be discussing the full range of issues impacting the Middle East region, both with my Saudi counterparts and with the Foreign Minister of Yemen. Together we will reinforce that there can be no military solution to the crisis in Yemen, and we will discuss how best to work with UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths to achieve a political solution.

Further information

- Follow the Alistair Burt on Twitter [@AlistairBurtUK](#)
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[News story: £700 million South West food exports are vital to economic success](#)

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Liz Truss used a visit to several food manufacturers in Cornwall this week (12 and 13 July 2018) to unveil new figures that showed food and agricultural exports in the first quarter of 2018 were up for the fourth year in a row.

From January to March 2018, £175 million worth of food and agricultural goods were exported from the region around the globe, up £10 million on last year.

In 2017, nearly £700 million worth of Cornish food and agricultural goods were exported around the world, and the Chief Secretary hopes that this figure will be bettered this year:

Food manufacturers in this region have made a flying start to 2018 and it's hugely encouraging to learn, once again, that food exports are up for the first quarter of this year.

Exporting boosts the earnings of a business, and the wages of local workers, it also enhances the reputation of Britain and Cornwall around the world.

I want to see more people abroad enjoying a taste of Cornwall, like the magnificent clotted cream I've seen made during my visit.

It is so important that local traders in this part of the world have the opportunity to increase their trade and create jobs and I'm here to learn how we can help them do this.

While visiting Cornwall, the Chief Secretary was hosted by groups of

businesses and also visited several food manufacturing factories.

The government is delivering for the South West, and the region now has the second-lowest unemployment rate of all UK regions. And this year alone employment has increased by 37,000, with a record high 2.8 million people now in work.

Since 2010 the government has worked hard to make sure businesses in all regions of the UK can start-up and scale-up. By cutting corporation tax we have helped encourage this, with 1.2 million more businesses starting up since 2010.

[News story: Measles outbreaks across England](#)

Updated: Added latest figures.

Latest update

Between 1 January 2018 and 6 July 2018 there have been 757 laboratory confirmed measles cases in England. Cases were reported in most areas with London (268), the South-East (161), South-West (118), West Midlands (85) and Yorkshire and Humberside (73) reporting the most cases (based on provisional figures).

Previous updates

1 June 2018

Between 1 January 2018 and 31 May 2018 there have been 587 laboratory confirmed measles cases in England. Cases were reported in most areas with London (213), the South-East (128), West Midlands (81), South-West (62), and Yorkshire and Humberside (53) reporting the most cases (based on provisional figures).

11 May 2018

Between 1 January 2018 and 9 May 2018 there have been 440 laboratory confirmed measles cases in England, with London (164), the South-East (86), West Midlands (78), South-West (42) and West Yorkshire (37) reporting the most cases.

The increase in measles circulation is mainly associated with travel to and from Europe where there are large ongoing measles outbreaks.

Young people and adults aged 15 and over who missed out on MMR vaccine when they were younger and some under-vaccinated communities have been particularly affected.

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can sometimes lead to serious complications and can be fatal in very rare cases.

Anyone who has not received 2 doses of MMR vaccine is at risk, but young people in environments with close mixing such as festivals are more at risk, as well as unvaccinated people travelling to Romania and Italy, where there are currently large outbreaks. Anyone planning to travel to Europe should check [NaTHNaC travel health advice](#).

PHE local health protection teams are working closely with the NHS and local authorities to raise awareness with health professionals and local communities.

The MMR vaccine is available to all adults and children who are not up to date with their two doses.

Anyone who is not sure if they are fully vaccinated should check with their GP practice who can advise them.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at PHE, said:

The measles outbreaks we are currently seeing in England are linked to ongoing large outbreaks in Europe. The majority of cases we are seeing are in teenagers and young adults who missed out on their MMR vaccine when they were children.

Anyone who missed out on their MMR vaccine in the past or are unsure if they had 2 doses should contact their GP practice to catch-up.

This serves as an important reminder for parents to take up the offer of MMR vaccination for their children at 1 year of age and as a pre-school booster at 3 years and 4 months of age.

We'd also encourage people to ensure they are up to date with their MMR vaccine before travelling to countries with ongoing measles outbreaks.

The UK recently achieved WHO measles elimination status and so the overall risk of measles to the UK population is low, however, we will continue to see cases in unimmunised individuals and limited onward spread can occur in communities with low MMR coverage and in age groups with very close mixing.

Press release: Water companies need to do more to protect the environment, report shows

Although there has been a gradual improving trend in environmental performance over recent years, the industry is not doing enough to reduce serious pollution incidents and comply with permits. Last year saw a rise in the most serious pollution incidents, with 'Category 1' incidents at 11. Previous reductions in serious (Category 1 and 2) incidents have also plateaued continuing at around one incident per week.

[The Water and Sewerage Companies' Environmental Performance Report](#) rates how well the big nine water and sewage companies (operating mainly or wholly in England) managed their impact on the environment in 2017. This is done across a wide range of measures – including pollution, managing sewage and complying with permits – and also compares individual company performance.

For the third year running, United Utilities and Wessex Water were the top performing water companies, and now Severn Trent Water has joined them. These companies received the top 4 star rating.

While the majority of companies delivered a 'good' or 'leading' performance, there are some poorer performers – the report reveals an urgent need by South West Water and Northumbrian Water to improve their performance which has seen them rated lowest this year. South West Water are the worst performer on pollution incidents and Northumbrian Water on permit compliance.

This comes in the face of record fines for the sector – in total more than £21million were issued as a result of 16 successful prosecutions by the Environment Agency. This has been driven by changes in Sentencing Guidelines. Earlier in the year, Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, called for fines for the most serious pollution incidents to be proportionate to the turnover of water companies.

Despite some good performances, the report demands far greater progress in 2018 and subsequent years. The Environment Agency has recently set out a more ambitious programme of environmental improvements which water companies will have to make between 2020 and 2025 – totalling £5billion of investment.

Toby Willison, Executive Director of Operations for the Environment Agency, said:

The leading companies in this report show that reducing their environmental impact can be done, so we look to companies to share good practice and improve quickly. But one serious pollution incident is one too many. We will always work closely with companies who want to do the right thing but we will take action

against those who don't.

Over the last 30 years there has been a significant improvement in water quality and this has happened not only thanks to the industry's massive investment but also the Environment Agency's strong regulatory role

The environment will benefit from a further £5billion of investment from the water sector by 2025. We expect to see a clear and continued focus on environmental performance in the next round of water company business plans to be submitted in the autumn.

The report concludes with a reminder about the pressures on water quality and supply – with a growing population and climate pressures on the water environment, and increased public and legal expectation, water companies need to further rise to the challenge and improve promptly. The Environment Agency will work with and regulate the companies to help achieve a better environment.