

News story: Low Pay Commission visits programme 2017

The Low Pay Commission's purpose is to provide advice to the Government on the rates of the National Living Wage and the other National Minimum Wages, as well as other related issues.

We want to hear first hand evidence from employers, workers and anyone else with a view on the minimum wage and its effects.

We are visiting Leeds, Glasgow and East Renfrewshire, Belfast, Newport and Gwent, and Melton and East Northamptonshire.

See the table below for dates, and click the link below to arrange a meeting with us. You can also give us a call on 020 7215 8772.

We are particularly interested in the effects of the National Living Wage, the minimum wage for workers aged 25 and over, which was introduced at £7.20 in April 2016 and will rise to £7.50 on 1 April 2017.

All the other minimum wage rates will increase on 1 April as well (see table below for rates) and we would like to hear views on these too.

The LPC organises an annual programme of visits to gather evidence in support of our recommendations to government. The visits are attended by members of our Commission and Secretariat.

We can host meetings in the locations we visit, but it is also extremely useful for us to visit businesses and workers at their place of work to see the effects of the minimum wage 'on the ground'. So, we would be delighted if you would like to host us and show us around your business.

Please note that the date of the visit to Belfast has been changed since the programme was originally sent to our stakeholders.

Date	Location
26-27 April	Leeds
31 May-1 June	Glasgow and East Renfrewshire
7-8 June	Belfast
5-6 July	Newport and Gwent
9-10 August	Melton and East Northamptonshire

National Minimum Wage rates

Minimum Wage rate	Current rate (hourly)	Rate from 1 April 2017
National Living Wage	£7.20	£7.50
21-24 Year Old Rate	£6.95	£7.05
18-20 Year Old Rate	£5.55	£5.60

Minimum Wage rate	Current rate (hourly)	Rate from 1 April 2017
16-17 Year Old Rate	£4.00	£4.05
Apprentice Rate	£3.40	£3.50
Accommodation offset	£6.00	£6.40

[Press release: UK food takes centre stage at world's largest annual trade show](#)

Award-winning Welsh marmalade, mozzarella from Durham, and shortbread from Glasgow are among nearly 100 UK food and drink specialities showcasing the best of British today at the world's largest annual food trade show in Dubai.

Gulfood brings together more than 100,000 buyers, investors and producers from around the world – and thanks to ongoing government investment and support it will give budding exporters and established global-hitters across the country the chance to promote their produce and boost exports to the region.

The Gulf is the UK's third largest export market – worth more than £1.5 billion – and is already home to more than 5,000 UK companies and 4,000 British brands.

Food Minister George Eustice is attending Gulfood 2017 to champion the UK's world-class offer and strengthen the UK's trade relationship with this rapidly growing market. He said:

The UK already exports more than £550 million worth of food and drink to the Gulf and UAE, and it is clear buyers and producers from around the world are eager to see what we have to offer.

Over the next five years we have an ambitious plan to further our export success, and thanks to our range of exciting foods and delectable drinks on display today, we're strengthening our global reputation for tasty, good quality produce.

Food and drink exports recently hit the £20 billion mark for the first time, and the Government is committed to building on this success as part of the [International Action Plan for Food and Drink](#) – which sets out how we will drive global exports by £2.9 billion over the next five years.

Prima Cheese is part of this success story and already exports to the Middle East and South America. The Seaham based company has represented the UK at

Gulfood for the past four years and recently expanded their workforce by 15 people to meet growing export demand.

Thanks to government support – which includes funding, expert training and exclusive networking opportunities – they will be part of the UK delegation joining 5,000 exhibitors at the annual five-day trade show, which kicked off yesterday (Sunday 26 February).

Operations Director Nima Beni said:

We've been coming to the Gulfood exhibition for the last four years and have found them to be our gateway to the world in terms to new business.

They will be joined by luxury British tea brand, Newby Teas London, who are taking the next step in their global mission. They will be exhibiting at Gulfood for the first time to showcase their renowned range of loose teas to a global audience.

The London based company already exports tea to Dubai but are keen to strengthen their presence in the Gulf and increase exports to this growing market.

Britain is home to one of the most diverse and innovative food cultures in the world. We export British classics such as whisky and gin, salmon and seafood, specialist teas and cheeses to over 200 countries and territories.

Through the Government's [Food is GREAT](#) campaign, Defra is committed to driving exports of UK food and drink, opening new international markets and supporting UK companies in their work to go global.

[Speech: Liam Fox speech welcoming Indian Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley, to the London Stock Exchange](#)

Minister Jaitley, it's a pleasure to see you again and to welcome you here for your visit to launch the UK / India Year of Culture, as part of India's independence celebrations.

It is an important opportunity to strengthen the economic and cultural ties between our countries.

The UK – India investment relationship is hugely important.

India is now the third largest investor and second largest job creator in the UK; the UK is the largest G20 investor in India and plays an important role in building skills in the Indian workforce.

And the UK government is committed to deepening this relationship further.

In my first months as Secretary of State for International Trade, I've been lucky enough to visit India twice – most recently accompanying the Prime Minister on her first bilateral visit outside Europe, as well as her first trade delegation.

In the words of Prime Minister Modi, India and the UK are an 'unbeatable partnership'.

And I'm very glad that our Prime Ministers recently committed to 'building the closest possible commercial and economic relationship'.

[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 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.

[Press release: Foreign Office Minister marks second anniversary of Boris Nemtsov's murder](#)

Minister for Europe, Sir Alan Duncan, urges Russia to bring all those responsible for the murder of Boris Nemtsov to justice

Boris Nemtsov, a former Deputy Prime Minister and leader of Russia's opposition, was shot dead two years ago on 27 February 2015. The suspected murderers are currently on trial, with verdicts expected in March, but there are concerns that the investigation has not pursued leads into who ordered

the assassination.

Minister for Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan, said:

Boris Nemtsov was a man of great stature, who was admired in the UK for his essential and courageous work in promoting democracy. I urge the Russian government to ensure that all those responsible for this appalling crime are brought to justice. Like many in Russia and the international community, the UK government is continuing to follow developments closely.

Further information