

# Press release: National Audit Office investigation into the Parole Board

The Chair of the Parole Board, Professor Nick Hardwick, has welcomed the publication of the National Audit Office's findings following its investigation into the work of the Parole Board.

He said: "I am pleased the NAO has recognised the huge challenges the Parole Board faced as it dealt with more cases and more oral hearings with fewer Parole Board members. As a result, the backlog of outstanding cases grew, with unacceptable delays for victims and prisoners. Given the scale of the challenge it has taken time to put things right.

I am pleased the NAO recognises the progress we have made. We have a new strategy, have recruited over a 100 new members and our backlogs are down by over a third. There is more to do and the NAO report helpfully highlights a number of areas for us to focus on. I am confident we will continue to make progress whilst making sure that in each of the approximately 7,000 cases we decide every year we protect the public whilst treating prisoners fairly."

Martin Jones, Chief Executive said:

"I welcome this report, as a timely examination of the challenges facing the parole system. In recent years there has been a substantial increase in the number of cases needing to be heard by the Parole Board and this has led to excessive, often unacceptable delays. We are now making steady progress in reducing those delays and are committed to ensuring that we deal with all cases fairly and in a timely fashion, whilst ensuring the protection of the public; but there remains more to do.

The appointment of new members, who are now starting to sit on hearings, will enable us to sustain our good progress in bringing the backlog down. Also, our digital project which aims to have paperless hearings by October, is helping to make the Parole Board run more efficiently. The majority of our members have transitioned from paper to digital working, saving the Board time and money. The backlog at present is 2,030 cases, down over a third from its high point of 3,163 cases in 2015, and we are on track to eradicate the delays by the end of the year."

## **Notes to Editors**

A full copy of the National Audit Office's investigation report (HC 19/2016-17) is available on the NAO website at [www.nao.org.uk](http://www.nao.org.uk)

The Parole Board Strategy 2016-2020 is available on the Parole Board web pages at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/parole-board>

The Parole Board is an independent body that works with its criminal justice partners to protect the public by risk assessing prisoners to decide whether they can safely be released into the community. The Board has responsibility

for considering life sentence prisoners (mandatory life, discretionary life and automatic life sentence prisoners and Her Majesty's Pleasure detainees; and prisoners given indeterminate sentences for public protection); and determinate sentence cases (discretionary conditional release prisoners serving more than 4 years whose offence was committed before 4 April 2005; prisoners given extended sentences for public protection for offences committed on or after 4 April 2005; and prisoners given an Extended Determinate Sentence or Sentence of Particular Concern after 3 December 2012). The Board considers initial release into the community and re-release following a recall to prison.

For further information please call Glenn Gathercole, Business Development Directorate on 0203 334 4392 during office hours, or 07725-927954 out of hours, or e-mail [glenn.gathercole@paroleboard.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:glenn.gathercole@paroleboard.gsi.gov.uk)

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## **Press release: Increase in BME workplace progression could give UK economy a £24bn boost – Baroness McGregor-Smith Review finds**

- GDP could increase by up to 1.3 per cent a year if workers from BME backgrounds progressed at the same rate as their white colleagues
- Businesses with more than 50 employees urged to publish breakdown of workforce by race and pay band
- New Business Diversity and Inclusion Group announced to make sure government and industry work more closely to improve representation, inclusiveness and opportunities in the workplace

The UK economy could benefit from a £24bn-a-year boost if black and minority ethnic (BME) people progressed in work at the same rate as their white counterparts, a government-backed review has found.

The independent Baroness McGregor-Smith Review, which has been published today, found people from BME backgrounds are still being held back in the workplace because of the colour of their skin, costing the UK economy the equivalent of 1.3 per cent in GDP a year.

The review also found employment rates for people from BME backgrounds are 12 per cent lower than their white counterparts at 62.8 per cent, with just six

per cent reaching top level management positions.

People from BME backgrounds are also more likely to work in lower paid and lower skilled jobs despite being more likely to have a degree, the report reveals.

In a series of recommendations, the review calls for large employers should lead the way in tackling barriers to BME progression, calling on companies with more than 50 employees to:

- Publish a breakdown of their workforce by race and pay band
- Draw up five-year aspirational diversity targets
- Nominate a board member to deliver on these targets

**Baroness McGregor-Smith said:**

“The time for talk on race in the workplace is over, it’s time to act. No-one should feel unable to reach the top of any organisation because of their race.

“If businesses and the Government act on my recommendations, it will show everyone from a minority background that Britain’s workplace is for everyone not just the privileged few.

“The consequences of continuing to do nothing will be damaging to the economy and to the aspirations of so many. So from the Cabinet table to the board rooms, there is no more time for excuses – just change.”

The Government has today also announced that a Business Diversity and Inclusion Group will be set up and chaired by Business Minister Margot James. It will bring together business leaders and organisations to coordinate action to remove barriers in the workplace and monitor employers’ progress.

The group will also bring together the leaders of three industry-led diversity reviews:

- Baroness McGregor-Smith
- Sir Philip Hampton and Dame Helen Alexander, who are leading a review aimed at increasing female leadership in FTSE companies
- Sir John Parker, who today concludes a consultation on recommendations to increase BME representation in the boardroom, to participate in the group

This highlights the importance government places on working with business to build an economy that works for everyone.

**Business Minister Margot James said:**

"It is very wrong that so many barriers lie in the way of people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Outdated attitudes or lack of awareness about ethnicity, in the workplace must be challenged.

"As this report shows, the economic benefit of harnessing untapped talent is huge and I urge employers to implement these recommendations to ensure everyone can reach the top of their career – whatever their background.

"I would like to thank Baroness McGregor-Smith for helping to shine a light on this important issue. We need to work together to build an inclusive culture in the workplace."

The review found large employers like the NHS, KMPG and RBS have benefitted from increased innovation, more effective teamwork and a better understanding of customer demands by harnessing BME talent.

As part of the recommendations, Business in the Community (BITC) has agreed to publish an annual list of Best 100 Employers to celebrate success and highlight best practice.

**Sandra Kerr, Race Equality Director at BITC, said:**

"As this review clearly shows, harnessing the very best of BME talent is the only way forward that makes sense for employers. But this change has to be business led.

"The annual list of 'Best 100 Employers for Race' will showcase businesses at their best and spur other employers on to improve diversity and inclusion in the workplace."

**Notes to editors**

1. 14 per cent of the working age population come from BME background, which is expected to rise to 21 per cent by 2051.
2. The review also found 15.3 per cent of BME workers would like to work more hours compared to 11.5 per cent of white workers.
3. Almost 500 individuals and companies responded to Baroness McGregor-Smith's call for evidence, including a host of FTSE 100 companies.
4. The Government has invited the following individuals and organisations to be founder members of the Business Diversity and Inclusion Group, which will meet quarterly:
  - Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith
  - Sir Philip Hampton and Dame Helen Alexander
  - Sir John Parker
  - Equalities Minister Caroline Dinenage
  - Confederation of British Industry
  - Institute of Directors
  - BITC
  - Financial Reporting Council
  - Equality and Human Rights Commission
5. Business in the Community offers businesses a number of practical ways

tackle social and environmental issues in the workplace.  
6. Anonymised case studies can be provided on request

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## **Press release: Charity Commission publishes report on Garden Bridge Trust**

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has today published [its findings](#) into the [Garden Bridge Trust](#) (registered charity number 1155246).

The regulator's case examined the charity's governance, specifically whether the trustees were meeting their legal duties and whether the charity was complying with charity law. It did not examine matters such as the merits of the project or how it is funded. These issues are outside its regulatory remit. The National Audit Office has published an investigation into the Department for Transport's £30 million grant towards the construction of the project and, separately, Dame Margaret Hodge MP is conducting a review of the project, including its value for money.

The Commission inspected the charity's books and records and met trustees and staff from the charity to examine:

- the awarding of contracts by the charity, including whether conflicts of interest had been declared and properly managed
- the due diligence carried out by the charity and the charity's ability to carry out a project of this size
- the funding, structure and governance of the charity

The Commission found that the trustees were meeting their duties and were acting in compliance with charity law.

The Commission also found that the processes for awarding of contracts appear to have been robust. However, trustees did not fully explore the opportunities to compare the critical paths of other comparable infrastructure projects and thus better enable themselves to assess project risk.

The Commission examined the management of conflict of interests within the charity and found that they were managed in line with the charity's policy. The regulator can also confirm that benefactors were not party to contracts made by the charity.

The trustees of the charity met required standards of financial management and were able to justify the high forward spend made by the charity and

account for the spend to date. The Commission considers that the trustees could make improvements to their annual reporting, to provide greater insight to the progress made and challenges addressed in the last financial year.

Further, the charity holds no reserves but expects to meet any obligations from the use of its restricted funds. Given the reliance on using restricted funds, the regulator would have expected a fuller description of how these funds could be used with greater detail on how the charity would meet its liabilities in the event of closure.

The charity cooperated fully with the Commission throughout its case.

**David Holdsworth, Chief Operating Officer at the Charity Commission said:**

We have been able to offer public assurance that the Garden Bridge Trust is meeting its obligations as a registered charity and that it has the proper financial controls in place. We are aware of the considerable public debate regarding this project. Our role is not to comment on the merits of the project but to assess concerns about its governance and ensure it is compliant with the legal framework for charities.

This case shows that high profile charities can attract considerable public scrutiny, and the public rightly expect charities to be transparent and accountable. Having trustees in place with the right skills and experience is crucial for a charity to operate effectively.

The Commission [publishes reports](#) regarding its compliance cases where it is appropriate and proportionate to publish a report, there is significant public interest in the case and its outcome and/or other charities need to be aware of the issues or lessons in the case.

The full report is available on [GOV.UK](#).

Ends

PR 12/17

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## Notes to editors

1. [The Charity Commission](#) is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
  2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).
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# Chambers of Commerce: Put practicality, certainty at the heart of Brexit negotiations

The British Chambers of Commerce publishes its Brexit Business Priorities report as a guideline for the UK government in its EU negotiations.

As the Chamber Network gathers in Westminster for the BCC Annual Conference, the British Chambers of Commerce has today (Tuesday) published a business blueprint for the UK government ahead of the upcoming Brexit negotiations.

Titled ***Business Brexit Priorities***, the report synthesizes feedback from over 400 businesses at 16 Chamber-hosted focus groups, along with nearly 20,000 responses to Chamber surveys. It puts forward priorities for action across seven key areas where business communities want practical solutions and certainty.

BCC evidence confirms that Europe will remain a key market for UK exporters and importers well into the future. As a consequence, it is imperative that the government achieves a pragmatic UK-EU deal that facilitates continued trade.

The key recommendations in the report are:

- On the **Labour Market**, the government should provide certainty for businesses on the residence rights of their existing EU workers, provide clarity on hiring from EU countries during the negotiation period, and avoid expensive and bureaucratic processes for post-Brexit hires from the EU
- On **Trade**, the government should aim to minimise tariffs, seek to avoid costly non-tariff barriers, grandfather existing EU free trade agreements with third countries, and expand the trade mission programme
- On **Customs**, the government should develop future customs procedures at the UK border in partnership with business, seek to maintain the UK's position as an entry point for global businesses to Europe
- On **Tax**, the government should guarantee that HMRC is appropriately resourced to help businesses through the transition process, and provide clarity on whether VAT legislation will continue to mirror current core VAT principles
- On **Regulation**, the government should ensure stability by incorporating existing EU regulations into UK law and maintaining these for a minimum period following Brexit, and ensure that product standards are aligned with, and recognised by, the EU to keep UK products competitive
- On **EU funding**, the government should maintain UK access to the European Investment Bank, and ensure there is no funding 'cliff-edge' for areas in receipt of EU funding
- On **Northern Ireland**, the government must avoid any return to a hard

border, so that businesses can move people and goods as freely as possible.

**Commenting on the report, Adam Marshall, BCC Director General, said:**

“Business communities across the UK want practical considerations, not ideology or politics, at the heart of the government’s approach to Brexit negotiations.

“What’s debated in Westminster often isn’t what matters for most businesses. Most firms care little about the exact process for triggering Article 50, but they care a lot about an unexpected VAT hit to their cash flow, sudden changes to regulation, the inability to recruit the right people for the job, or if their products are stopped by customs authorities at the border. The everyday nitty-gritty of doing business across borders must be front and centre in the negotiation process.

“What’s also clear is that the eventual Brexit deal is far from the only thing on the minds of the UK’s business communities. An ambitious domestic agenda for business and the economy is also essential so that business can drive our post-Brexit success. Firms across the UK want a clear assurance that Brexit isn’t going to be the only thing on the government’s economic agenda for the next few years.”

**Marcus Mason, Head of Business at the BCC, and author of the report, added:**

“Since the historic vote on June 23, we have worked with Chamber business communities all across the UK to determine their key priorities for the Brexit transition.

“This report brings those practical priorities together and urges the government to adopt them in the forthcoming negotiations. Chambers of Commerce stand ready to help the government shape a pragmatic and practical approach to the coming transition, so that firms can continue to trade successfully with customers and suppliers across Europe and around the world.”

**Ends**

**Notes to editors:**

**The full report can be found [here](#).**

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: [www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

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## 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.