

Royal murder and mystery as international students dig up Scottish heritage for show garden

A group of eight international Garden Design students at Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) are digging up a dark moment in Scottish history to inspire their "Hortus Homicida" show garden in a bid for go

News story: Foreign Secretary at EU Foreign Affairs Council

From:

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The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson spoke to media ahead of the EU Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

We will be doing a bit on Libya this morning. Talking about the needs to unify the east and the west of the country, build on the Libya political agreement, seeing what we can do there to be more creative. Whilst of course, at the same time, addressing the refugee crisis, the migration crisis. As you know at Valletta, the Malta Summit, Britain pledged another £30 million to help tackle that crisis. Proving once again, as I never tire of telling you, that we may be leaving the EU but we are not leaving Europe. We remain absolutely committed to that joint endeavour.

We'll be talking about Ukraine as well, talking about the recent upsurge in violence. Everybody is very concerned about that. The causes, as you know, aren't quite clear. There's a bit of murkiness about who initiated that. But the UK will be insisting there is no case for relaxation of the sanctions and every case for keeping up the pressure on Russia.

I'm sure there'll be discussions on Syria, the Middle East Peace Process and much else besides.

Further information

[News story: European referral of veterinary medicines containing zinc oxide: Call for evidence](#)

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The EMA Veterinary Committee has concluded that the benefit:risk balance for veterinary medicines containing zinc oxide is negative and that this class of products should be withdrawn.

[Previous news story regarding the European referral outcome](#)

The deadline for submission of responses is: 11:59pm 21 February

The EMA's Committee for Veterinary Medicinal Products (CVMP) concluded in December 2016 that veterinary medicines containing zinc oxide, used to prevent post weaning diarrhoea in piglets, should be withdrawn from the market. This recommendation was based on a conclusion that the risk these products were considered to present to the environment has not been outweighed by the demonstrated benefits.

The CVMP have now been requested to re-examine this conclusion; their final position is expected in March.

The CVMP provide scientific advice to the EU Commission on the benefits and risks relating to authorised veterinary medicines. It is for the EU Commission to decide what action to take as a result.

EU Member States have now been invited by the EU Commission to provide written comments by 13 March 2017, regarding a proposed transitional period before the withdrawal of these products is implemented.

The comments from the Member States should propose a duration for this transitional period, supported by concrete evidence. The EU Commission has also requested information on measures that have already been taken at a national level to reduce the use of zinc oxide and the use of antibiotics in pig production, for example through changes to animal husbandry practices or

use of alternatives, including vaccines.

Your views

The VMD therefore invites any interested parties to submit relevant evidence via our [proforma](#) (MS Word Document, 17.2KB) to postmaster@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk.

Submissions should:

- be concise
- be written in English
- be limited to 2000 words, excluding references; submissions must reference the source of any data provided (provide weblinks to any data that are already in the public domain)
- be specific to proposals for the duration of a transitional period
- be supported by evidence related to:
 - the impact of product withdrawal on pig health and welfare and/or pig productivity
 - husbandry and/or production system changes that will be necessary to mitigate this impact, and the economic cost of these changes
 - effective alternatives to zinc oxide, either currently available or in development

[BCC Budget Submission: Action needed on business rates burden sapping businesses](#)

Ahead of the Chancellor's Spring Budget on March 8, the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) is urging the government to take action on delivering real reform to the business rates system.

The business group is calling on the Chancellor to use his last Spring Budget to support long-term business investment by taking action to deliver real reform to the business rates system. As it stands, the system creates a number of perverse incentives for business location, property improvement, and plant and machinery investment.

BCC seeks four key measures on business rates from the Spring Budget:

- **Abandon the fiscal neutrality principle in business rates reform** – an unacceptable barrier to fundamental reform of the business rates system that is unique to that tax
- **Bring forward the switch from RPI to CPI, currently planned for April**

2020, to April 2017

- Removal of all plant and machinery from the valuation of property for business rates purposes
- Drop proposals to restrict the ability of the Valuation Tribunal for England to order changes to business rates liabilities

Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the BCC, said:

“The current rates system is broken, and despite attempts by successive governments to introduce marginal reforms, the fundamental unfairness of business rates remains.

“We’re calling for steps to be introduced which would help alleviate some of the excessive pressure put on businesses by rates. The policy of fiscal neutrality means there are winners and losers across the country from reforms, but limits the government’s scope to bring about fundamental change to the system. Excluding plant and machinery from valuations would remove a perverse incentive for investment, and businesses should be allowed to appeal valuations through a simpler and fairer process.

“Businesses from across the Chamber network of all sizes, sectors and locations, lament the burden of this high up-front cost, which they are forced to pay before making even a penny of profit.”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

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

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[News story: MMO calls for feedback on](#)

marine planning

A [questionnaire](#) on the first outputs of marine planning in the north east, north west, south east and south west has been launched.

The questionnaire, which is open until Friday 31 March 2017, asks for feedback on the recently published Issues Database, supporting evidence, proposed draft policies to date as well as a new [interactive format](#).

It's the first opportunity for stakeholders to see how marine planning is progressing in north east, north west, south east and south west marine plan areas, marking an important milestone in the marine planning process.

The questionnaire is part of an eight week programme of activity, which also includes a [series of workshops](#).

The questionnaire and workshops are an opportunity to see how the issues and evidence gathered last year are being taken forward, and how proposed draft policies for the areas are being developed.

A new [proposed format](#) for marine plans is also introduced, which takes a shorter, more digital, interactive approach, linking directly to our Marine Information System (MIS).

Steve Brooker, Chief Planning Officer said:

"We encourage everyone who uses the marine area to complete this short questionnaire.

"Marine plans will shape how we all – from developers to local residents – interact with the marine area over the next 20 years, and so it's important that everyone has the opportunity to take part in their development.

"The questionnaire and workshops mark the end of the first year of marine planning in the north east, north west, south east and south west, and we welcome feedback on how our work is progressing."

To take part in the questionnaire visit [our consultation website](#).

To sign up for a marine planning workshop, visit one of our Eventbrite pages: