

Environmental business initiative receives £120,000 funding boost

Business support organisation The Water Hub has received a total of £120,000 funding that will help it continue to back innovative solutions to local environmental challenges.

The funding has come from the North East Local Enterprise Partnership and partners, including the Environment Agency, Durham County Council, Durham University, and Northumbrian Water Ltd; allowing the initiative to establish a business development plan for how it may continue to offer support for research and innovation in the region.

By bringing together the water industry and local businesses on environmental projects, The Water Hub has provided direct support to 54 organisations through collaborations, research development, and business support.

It is estimated that this work has resulted in a boost of more than £1.7 million for the local economy.

George Gerring of The Water Hub and Senior Operations Officer for the Environment Agency, said:

We are so excited to be entering phase 2 of our vision, under the funding and development guidance of the Environment Agency, to help broker and initiate key relationships between the environmental and business sectors.

We are in a healthy position to scale and grow The Water Hub into establishing the organisation as a national and international asset. We have proven that the projects we help instigate produce a direct return on investment, which should be our magnet towards attracting future investment to the region.

This is a global calling card to show investors that the North East of England is open for business, and to demonstrate what the region has to offer as a vibrant and ambitious place to develop new water and environmentally centred products.

In these uncertain times during the global pandemic we are also wanting to show our support towards SMEs and provide a positive platform for the region to build upon.

Richard Baker, Strategy and Policy Director at the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, said:

The Water Hub has been an excellent initiative to draw together partners, businesses and communities in the drive to develop solutions to key water and environmental challenges and has created an excellent collaborative model which has the potential to position the North East as a leading region for this work.

It's a pleasure to be a partner to the Environment Agency, water sector and universities involved and look forward to the next stage of our work together.

As one of a group of natural assets, water is identified in the Strategic Economic Plan and Local Industrial Strategy as an important economic opportunity for our region, not least as the world seeks responses to Climate Change. We're looking forward to continuing this partnership as this crucial work continues.

During a recent survey of businesses supported by The Water Hub, one SME, Jack Shuttleworth, Project Manager for SEL Environmental Ltd, said:

The Water Hub has helped us to secure approximately £200,000 of new business, however the potential value is huge as collaborating with The Water Hub has allowed us to get in front of huge businesses.

For further information about The Water Hub please visit www.thewaterhub.org.uk and follow them on Twitter @hub_water

Civil news: revised fees for immigration and asylum work

News story

New fees were introduced for immigration and asylum work on 8 June 2020 which will apply for the next 12 months.



Revised immigration and asylum work fees were introduced on 8 June for controlled legal representation (CLR) work under the 2018 civil contract.

The new fee is known as a 'stage 2c fee'. It replaces the previous stage 2a and stage 2b fee when appeals are made using HM Courts and Tribunal Service online process. This is where appeal skeleton arguments (ASA) or written submissions have been needed.

The revised fees will last for one year and are as follows:

We are making changes in the digital billing service known as Contracted Work and Administration (CWA) to enable you to claim for the 2c fee.

The updated version of the immigration and asylum specification for the 2018 civil contract is now available on GOV.UK.

Further information

[Standard Civil contract 2018](#) – for updated version of immigration and asylum specification

[Regulatory amendments](#) – for confirmation of stage 2c fee rates

Published 11 June 2020

[UK statement on the death of President Nkurunziza of Burundi](#)

Press release

British Ambassador to Burundi expresses her condolences to the Republic of Burundi and its people



Following the death of President Nkurunziza of Burundi on Monday 8 June, British Ambassador Jo Lomas said:

“I would like to offer my condolences to the Republic of Burundi and its people at this time. We hope that following the recent elections, Burundi sees a peaceful transition and forges a path towards stability, democracy and prosperity.”

Published 11 June 2020

[UK Statement to the WTO Council for Trade in Goods – Item 9](#)

UNITED KINGDOM – DRAFT GOODS SCHEDULE AND PROPOSED UK TRQ COMMITMENTS: SYSTEMIC CONCERNS – REQUEST FROM AUSTRALIA, BRAZIL, CANADA, CHINA, NEW ZEALAND, THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, SWITZERLAND, THE UNITED STATES, AND URUGUAY

Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank Members for their statements under this item.

As Members will be aware, on 1 February 2020 the United Kingdom circulated document WT/GC/206, which sets out the main implications arising from the United Kingdom’s departure from the European Union in the WTO.

The United Kingdom has undertaken its transition in the WTO with the aim of maintaining the existing balance of rights and obligations between the United Kingdom and its trading partners. The United Kingdom has set out its Goods Schedule, circulated in document G/MA/TAR/RS/570, on that basis.

The United Kingdom has engaged extensively with Members on that Schedule, and we remain open to discussions to ensure that conditions remain no less favourable to trade after the end of the Transition Period agreed between the European Union and the United Kingdom, which will end on 31 December 2020.

Recognising that, the United Kingdom is currently undergoing a process under Article XXVIII to seek agreement with relevant WTO Members on how to extract the United Kingdom's TRQ commitments from those of the EU28.

The United Kingdom's last round of Article XXVIII negotiations took place in February 2020 in Geneva, and we hope to have the next round of negotiations in July.

On AMS, we note some Members asked about whether the European Union's AMS will reduce proportionally in line with the commitment set out in the UK's Schedule XIX. The United Kingdom cannot comment on the European Union's ongoing processes. However, we would recall that it was clear in the joint UK-EU letter of 11 October 2017 that the final bound commitment level for domestic agricultural support would be apportioned between the EU and the UK. This was also restated in the explanatory note to the United Kingdom's Goods Schedule in document G/MA/TAR/RS/570, and is a clear commitment. We would also remind members that this explanatory note contains details on how the AMS apportionment was calculated.

Turning to other points raised: As some Members will be aware, the United Kingdom announced the 'UK Global Tariff' on 19 May 2020. This is the applied Most Favoured Nation tariff regime that the United Kingdom will apply from 1 January 2021, following the end of the Transition Period, and it will be expressed in the United Kingdom's national currency.

As a consequence of this change, and to ensure stability and transparency between the UK's bound and applied Schedules, the United Kingdom has circulated document G/MA/TAR/RS/570/Add.1, rectifying its bound goods Schedule to redenominate all currency components in Part I and Part IV – Section I of the Schedule from Euros to pound Sterling. This brings the United Kingdom into line with most other WTO Members, who denominate their schedules in their own currency. In order to provide Members with complete transparency on the steps we are taking to effect this currency conversion, the UK introduced this matter as a standalone technical rectification of Schedule XIX with no additional changes being made at this time. This currency rectification process has been submitted without prejudice to already ongoing discussions on the broader certification of Schedule XIX.

The United Kingdom looks forward to continuing engagement with members on these important issues

Thank you.

UK Statement to the WTO Council for

Trade in Goods – Item 7

PROCEDURES TO ENHANCE TRANSPARENCY AND STRENGTHEN NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS UNDER WTO AGREEMENTS – ARGENTINA, AUSTRALIA, CANADA, COSTA RICA, THE EUROPEAN UNION, ISRAEL, JAPAN, NEW ZEALAND, THE SEPARATE CUSTOMS TERRITORY OF TAIWAN, PENGHU, KINMEN AND MATSU, AND THE UNITED STATES (JOB/GC/204/REV.3-JOB/CTG/14/REV.3)

Thank you Chair.

The United Kingdom welcomes continued discussion on this important issue. While disputes and negotiations might sometimes dominate the headlines, the role of transparency in supporting the WTO's work is every bit as important.

Transparency brings certainty and predictability to trade. It underpins the process of members monitoring each other's compliance with the WTO agreements and supports evidence-based negotiations.

That is why the United Kingdom supports and intends to co-sponsor this proposal to improve compliance around transparency and notifications. We see it as a pragmatic response to the challenges that the WTO is facing in this area.

Nonetheless, the United Kingdom is alive to the capacity constraints that some developing members, in particular LDC members, face. That is why we welcome the changes made with respect to LDCs in the latest version of the proposal, and we remain interested in further discussions on mechanisms to provide technical assistance, and notifications guidance, to developing countries who struggle to meet their notification requirements.

In that vein I would recall the announcement I made at the General Council on 15 May, setting out the support the UK is now providing to eligible developing country members to notify COVID-related measures to the WTO's monitoring exercise, through our Trade and Investment Advocacy Fund.

The United Kingdom looks forward to engaging further with WTO members on this proposal.