

## **PM meeting with Business Council co-chairs: 9 October 2019**

The Prime Minister met with the co-chairs of the five Business Councils at Downing Street this afternoon. The Business Secretary, Andrea Leadsom, also joined the meeting.

The Prime Minister thanked all the co-chairs for the policy initiatives they have put forward on issues affecting the UK business environment and competitiveness, and emphasised that he wants the UK to be the best place to start, grow and run a business.

Many of the councils' initiatives have been progressed as part of the Prime Minister's key priorities for post-Brexit Britain, including a new Trans-Pennine rail route between Manchester and Leeds to boost regional growth, a new immigration visa to enable international students to work in the UK for two-years after graduation, and a £5bn gigabit broadband boost.

The Prime Minister set out ongoing work in Whitehall to take forward ideas from the councils, from measures to boost research and development to support for tech entrepreneurs.

On Brexit, the Prime Minister reiterated that we want the UK to leave the EU with a deal when we depart on 31 October. The Business Secretary urged the co-chairs to support small businesses and those in their supply chain to get ready for Brexit at the end of the month.

They agreed to continue to drive progress on the recommendations from the councils across government in the upcoming months.

Co-chairs in attendance

- Sir Ian Davis, Chairman, Rolls Royce
- Sir Roger Carr, Chairman, BAE Systems
- Jan Du Plessis, BT Group
- Dave Lewis, CEO, Tesco
- Emma Walmsley, CEO, GlaxoSmithKline
- Baroness Shriti Vadera, Chair, Santander UK
- Emma Jones, Founder, Enterprise Nation
- Brent Hoberman, Chairman, Founders' Factory

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## **Banks pledge their support to SMEs**

# through Brexit and beyond in new Charter

- Banks and lenders make concrete pledges to continue supporting British businesses seeking finance to get ahead
- pledges include that banks are 'open for business and ready to lend'
- commitment comes following first meeting of the new Business Finance Council, made up of government, lenders and business representative organisations

In a new [SME Finance Charter](#) published today (Wednesday 9 October), Britain's top banks and others reaffirmed their commitment to back British business through access to finance, helping SMEs plan for the future ahead of Brexit on 31 October and beyond.

The Charter was adopted at the first meeting of the new [Business Finance Council](#), co-chaired by Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom and Economic Secretary to the Treasury John Glen today. The Council was attended by representatives from Britain's leading banks, alternative lenders and representatives from the British Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses.

The SME Finance Charter is made up of 5 overarching pledges that provide a framework for lenders to set out their own individual commitments to SMEs in the coming weeks. In order to become signatories to the Charter, each lender will need to demonstrate what specific actions they are taking to deliver on the pledges.

Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

I have met many businesses since my appointment as Business Secretary and access to finance is a common cause of concern. We want to see the banks and lenders back our small and medium sized businesses, and this commitment is the first step in giving them the confidence they need to invest and grow.

Finance is available, and I would urge SMEs to talk to their providers and get the advice they need to scale up on a truly global stage ahead of us leaving the EU and into the future.

The 5 pledges made by finance providers through the SME Finance Charter include:

- confirming they are 'open for business and ready to lend' which includes specific funds they have set up for SME lending
- helping SMEs to prepare for Brexit and beyond by setting out the resources that they can provide

- providing clear and accessible information for SMEs seeking finance, including expectations around the management of accounts, cashflow projections and security, explaining options if initial applications are declined
- treating all customers fairly, explaining how they will resolve any disputes that may occur
- working with the government-owned British Business Bank to signpost their guidance and to help businesses secure a loan or overdraft even if they lack the security for the borrowing, giving SMEs the ability to invest and expand

These 5 areas were identified by the Council as significant to ensure that the SME finance market works effectively and coupled with the cross-sector backing for the Charter secured today, demonstrates the attention and support that the UK gives to its SMEs.

Small Business Minister Kelly Tolhurst said:

As a former small business owner, I understand the challenges involved in securing finance. The banks have said that they are open for business and ready to lend, with today's Charter underlining that commitment, something that should be a great encouragement to our fantastic British SMEs.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury, John Glen, said:

I want to see our small and medium-sized businesses seize the opportunities of Brexit – expanding, creating jobs and boosting our economy.

Today's Charter shows that lenders are backing businesses and stand ready to provide advice, guidance and financial support to help them prosper. I will continue to work closely with lenders and business representatives to ensure our SMEs have everything they need as we get ready to leave the EU.

UK Finance CEO Stephen Jones said:

The SME Finance Charter reiterates the banking and finance industry's commitment to support SME customers throughout the UK's departure from the EU and beyond.

Banks and lenders stand ready to support viable businesses whatever the outcome, and continue to provide guidance to help smaller firms plan for the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Through our Let's Talk Business campaign, we are encouraging all businesses to contact their finance providers now to discuss how

best to prepare and consider any additional financing needs.

The Council will continue work to identify and address any barriers faced by small and mid-sized businesses on an ongoing basis, with a focus on securing finance and getting ready for Brexit on 31 October. The Council membership is made up of major lenders and alternative finance providers, as well as ministers, UK Finance and the Finance and Leasing Association, the British Business Bank and business representative organisations.

The secretariat for the [Council](#) is provided by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, HM Treasury and UK Finance, ensuring that British business gets the support it deserves across government and the financial sector.

The full list of signatories to the Charter, together with links to their individual statements, will be published on the [Charter page](#). The need for the Business Finance Council will be reviewed after 6 months.

£1.3 billion is available to lenders through the government-owned [British Business Bank](#) so they can enable their SME customers to invest in capital, increase export capabilities and manage cashflow: £300 million headroom available this financial year through the [Enterprise Finance Guarantee](#) which helps viable smaller businesses that lack sufficient security against which to borrow; and £1 billion available over the longer term under the ENABLE Guarantee, which helps reduce the amount of regulatory capital lenders need to hold against loans to small businesses. The British Business Bank is already supporting over £6.6 billion of finance to almost 90,000 SMEs.

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## [First Joint VMD, VPC and Pharmaceutical Industry Information Event 2019](#)

The VMD hosted a very successful stakeholder open meeting which this year was combined with the Veterinary Products Committee (VPC) and the pharmaceutical industry information event. The day brought together a wide range of stakeholders from the pharmaceutical Industry, VPC members, wholesalers, consultants, the charity sector and the media.

Over 70 people attended the event which was opened by Professor Pete Borriello (CEO) and Abi Seager (Director of Authorisations) to hear the latest information about:

- the work of the VPC from its chair – Malcolm Bennett
- the VMD's international work

- antimicrobial resistance
- animal use in Quality Control testing of Immunological Veterinary Medicinal Products
- the VMD's joint inspections with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency
- Brexit's implications for the supply and regulation of veterinary medicines
- the relevance of European regulations

David Catlow – a VMD Non-Executive Director and Clinical Director of the Blue Cross – gave a keynote speech on 'Opportunity in a Changing Landscape' highlighting the VMD's excellent work to ensure continued effective medicines regulation after Brexit.

There were two new elements to the event. Over lunch attendees enjoyed displays and demonstrations from the VMD teams on:

- VMD's Digital Services
- Adverse Event reporting
- Brexit readiness
- Special Imports
- Enforcement
- Communications

There was also a drop-in 'Ask an Assessor' area where scientific assessors were on hand to answer questions about any aspect of the safety, quality and efficacy assessment processes for marketing authorisations applications for veterinary medicines.

The VMD has already received very positive feedback on the event, in particular its innovative format and content.

The event is part of the VMD's ongoing work to engage with its stakeholders on medicines regulation.

Copies of the PowerPoint Presentation slides from the event are available on request from [postmaster@vmd.gov.uk](mailto:postmaster@vmd.gov.uk)

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## [Environment Agency prosecutes Lancashire farm & contractors for polluting river](#)

09th October 2019

Withgill Farm and Wilson's Contractors Ltd both pleaded guilty at Blackburn

Magistrates Court yesterday to negligent culpability and harming the environment in April 2017.

Wilson Contractors Limited (trading as Wilson Farming) had spread slurry on behalf of Withgill Farm which is one of the largest dairy farms in the UK. Both companies were fined £11,500 and each ordered to pay £4,063 in costs and a £170 victim surcharge after the Environment Agency brought the case to court.

Following a complaint from the public, Environment Agency officers investigated the incident at Withgill Farm, Great Mitton near Clitheroe, which is bounded by the river Hodder to the west and the river Ribble to the east.

Environment Agency officers found that a significant volume of slurry from a dairy herd had entered a field drain outlet at the farm and flowed into a small stream, leading into the river Hodder – a river well known for its salmon fishery. The Hodder was discoloured and smelled of slurry for several kilometres and this continued beyond its confluence with the river Ribble. The Ribble at Lambing Clough near Dinckley, over 7.5 km from the entry point, was deemed unfishable by anglers.

The next day, Environment Agency officers saw that an earth dam had been built across the end of the stream to prevent further pollution and witnessed contactors tankering slurry away. Below the dam, the stream had almost dried up and slurry was no longer entering the river, however, the river was discoloured heavily downstream of the confluence with a distinct cloudy plume extending into the main channel.

The court heard that the River Hodder's ecology was largely unaffected by the incident, however, there was significant impact on amenity, on the River Hodder and the River Ribble.

Jackie Monks, the Environment Agency's Environment Officer, said: "Pollution incidents such as this can cause distress to local communities, reduce water quality and spoil ecosystems.

"As this prosecution shows, we take tough action against any company or individual who causes significant pollution and damage to the environment and we hope that these fines act as a deterrent and help us better protect the environment and the public in the future.

"This incident could have caused major harm to the fishery in the River Hodder and River Ribble, however, we believe that because it happened during very cold and wet weather, it prevented a major fish kill.

"Environment Agency staff respond to pollution incidents 24/7 to contain pollution and protect water quality. We investigate pollution incidents to find the source, stop the problem and understand how best to reduce any impacts on local communities and the environment. We would urge anyone who notices pollution to land or water to call our hotline: 0800 80 70 60."

The companies refused to cooperate with the Environment Agency's

investigation, however, did implement works to try to remedy the problem as the contractors constructed a dam and tankered the slurry away.

The court heard that Wilthgill Farm had received a previous conviction, two cautions and a number of warning letters – all for water pollution offences. Wilson Contractors Limited had no previous convictions.

The River Hodder is a county biological heritage site which rises in the Bowland Fells. It then flows approximately 23 miles to its confluence with the River Ribble, of which it is a major tributary. The catchment falls within the Forest of Bowland, a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The River Hodder is a highly valued salmonid fishery and, together with the Ribble, is very popular with anglers.

Environmental incidents can be reported to the Environment Agency 24/7 on 0800 807060, waste crime can also be reported anonymously via Crimestoppers online or on 0800 555111.

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## [Drunken tube pusher sees sentence increased](#)

A man who drunkenly pushed another man onto the tube tracks has had his sentence increased after intervention by the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.

In October 2018, 23 year old Mathuram Muthuraja, was on his way out with a group to a nightclub and had consumed alcohol. Muthuraja upset various members of the group throughout the journey with his erratic behaviour, including touching members of the groups' rears and biting their necks. His behaviour continued to escalate and became aggressive as the group alighted the train and onto the tube platform at Barons Court Underground Station in west London.

While on the tube platform, the offender pushed the victim – who was in the group but not personally known to him – onto the track with force and the victim narrowly missed the live running rail. Fortunately, the approaching train was stopped while the victim remained injured and unconscious on the tracks. As a result of the incident, the victim had bruising all over his body and pain to both his knees, ribs and right shoulder.

On 24 July 2019 Muthuraja was sentenced at Central Crown Court to 3 years' imprisonment.

The Court of Appeal increased this to 5 years' imprisonment, after the sentence was referred as being unduly lenient by the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP.

After the hearing the Solicitor General said:

'The aggressive and deliberate actions of the offender caused the victim pain and could have ended his life. With this in mind, it is right that the Court of Appeal lengthened the offender's sentence.'