News story: New taskforce to tackle economic crime

The Home Secretary and Chancellor will today (14 January 2019) jointly chair a new government taskforce which will work with senior figures from the UK financial sector to tackle economic crime.

The scale of this type of crime – which includes fraud, bribery, corruption and money laundering – is estimated to be at least £14.4 billion per year.

The new Economic Crime Strategic Board, which will meet twice a year, will set priorities, direct resources and scrutinise performance against the economic crime threat, which is set out in the Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) Strategy.

The board includes CEOs and chief executives from the banking institutions Barclays, Lloyds and Santander as well as senior representatives from UK Finance, the National Crime Agency (NCA) and the Solicitors Regulation Authority, Accountants Affinity Group and National Association of Estate Agents.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

> We need to take action on all fronts to target the corrupt fraudsters who are lining their pockets with dirty money and living luxury lifestyles at the expense of law-abiding citizens.
>
> The Government is already investing millions in the fight against economic crime, but it is crucial we work closely with our financial sector partners to win this battle.
>
> These criminals threaten the UK's reputation as a world-leading place to do business and we have a joint responsibility to stop them.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, said:

> The UK is leading the world in the fight against illicit finance, preventing fraudsters from stealing billions from the public each year. We know more can be done which is why the Home Secretary and I are launching the first ever cross-departmental board to prevent more people from becoming victims of economic crime.
>
> By bringing together specialists across the public and private sector, we can use the best of our expertise to maintain our status as a global financial centre.

At the board meeting, the Home Secretary will confirm that the Home Office will commit £3.5 million in 2019/20 to support work to reform the suspicious activity reports regime (SARs).

With the private sector, law enforcement and regulators, the Home Office is co-designing a new system which is more efficient and effective, and which will benefit business and the public sector.

SARs are the mechanism used by members of the regulated sectors, including the banking, accountancy, legal and property sectors to flag up suspicions about potential money laundering and terrorist financing to the NCA.

The NCA received a record number of reports last year. The number of SARs reports rose by about 10% to 463,938 during 2017-18, compared with the previous year, including a 20% rise to 22,196 in requests for a defence against money laundering.

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SARs reform is one of the commitments in the SOC Strategy, launched in November, which is backed by Government investment of at least £48 million in 2019 and 2020 to further ramp up law enforcement capabilities to specifically tackle illicit finance.

The Home Secretary will thank UK Finance for its commitment to SARs reform. The government is discussing with the private sector the best way to ensure this has the funding it needs. Since late 2018 the financial sector has already committed over £1 million in funding for the project.

Bob Wigley, Chair of UK Finance, said:

> We want to ensure the UK is the safest and most transparent financial centre in the world. Banks already spend over £5 billion a year fighting economic crime, but the private sector can’t tackle it alone. That’s why the finance industry works closely with law enforcement and Government agencies to stop the threat and protect customers. The new Economic Crime Strategic Board will strengthen these vital partnerships.
>
> As part of this, it’s vital that we have the best anti-money laundering reporting system possible. The industry is committed to supporting the Government in reforming the existing regime and UK Finance is currently hosting a team of industry and Home Office experts to achieve just that.

Other measures in the SOC Strategy include additional investment in the multi-agency National Economic Crime Centre (NECC) which is now operational and includes officers from the NCA, HM Revenue and Customs, City of London Police, Serious Fraud Office, Financial Conduct Authority Crown Prosecution

Service and the Home Office.

News story: UK implementation of the Trade Mark Directive 2015 comes into force

The changes support innovation and economic growth in the UK, helping to minimise differences between the trade mark frameworks across Europe.

They also modernise and future-proof the trade mark system for users.

The amendments reflect the outcome of a public consultation on the Trade Mark Directive. Some of these important changes relate to:

- the ability to file a trade mark for a sound or motion as an MP3 or MP4 file
- the removal of expired trade marks from search reports
- changes to who can apply for a collective trade mark
- changes to proof of use periods in opposition and invalidation periods
- separate oppositions will now be required to jointly oppose (or invalidate) a trade mark based on earlier rights, unless the parties jointly own these

Further information on the changes, and how they may affect you, can be found in the business guidance.

The Trade Marks Act and Trade Marks Rules have also been updated to reflect the changes.

Why did we make the changes?

The Trade Mark Directive 2015 aims to make trade mark laws consistent across Europe. The amendments to the Trade Marks Act align the UK’s trade mark laws more closely with those of the rest of Europe. These changes therefore make it easier for UK businesses to protect their IP rights here and across the

EU.

We know the changes are widely supported by users of the UK trade mark system. We have committed to introduce and maintain them regardless of the outcome of the negotiations surrounding the UK's exit from the EU.

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Speech: UK and Norway energy partnership for clean growth

Thank you for the invitation to speak today about a subject that is right at the heart of the UK-Norway relationship and the British strategy for clean growth. Given the natural gas focus of this seminar, I would like to begin by setting out the importance of gas to the UK economy. I will also comment on where gas fits with our plan for decarbonisation and how this provides new opportunities for growth in the British-Norwegian energy partnership. Role of gas in the UK energy mix

Gas remains one of the key pillars of the UK's energy mix, and a central reason why the UK's energy partnership with Norway is so important.

Gas accounts for over one third of the UK's energy production. Around 70 per cent of all heat generated is from gas. For electricity, around 40 per cent is from gas. We have seen that gas generation is one of the most flexible and reliable sources of power.

The UK produces less than half of its gas requirements. We have one of the largest and most liquid gas markets in Europe, with extensive import infrastructure and a diverse range of gas supply sources.

To give you the latest statistics [2017]:

British energy policy-makers give a lot of thought to present and future demand. Their analysis tells them that gas will remain critical to the UK energy mix, both for energy security, and our transition to a low carbon economy over the medium term into the 2030s.

UK gas demand is expected to remain relatively stable over the next two decades.

We expect domestic production to gradually reduce by around 5 per cent per year until 2035. Therefore, the role of imported gas to the UK is set to grow in the medium term.

This presents opportunities for our suppliers including Norway.

The decline in UK domestic gas production means that in the decade from 2007 to 2017 our gas imports increased from 20 percent to 45 percent of UK demand.

The UK’s main source of gas imports has been Norway, making up three-quarters of UK imports in 2017. Reliability of supply is of great importance to British gas consumers. It is part of the regular conversation which we have with Norway, at both policy and technical levels.

We are encouraged that in our various dialogues with Norway we are receiving excellent understanding and a resolve to ensure that gas outages don’t happen. I take this opportunity to underline the importance of this to the UK, particularly as our gas supplies from Norway look set to increase.

Decarbonisation is central to UK policy. We need to reduce our fossil fuel consumption across the economy, including the way in which we use gas.

Last year, the UK announced an end to coal-fired power generation. We will phase out the use of unabated coal to produce electricity by 2025.

This will bring further opportunities for gas generation, alongside the growing sources of renewable generation.
I mentioned that the role of imported gas to the UK is set to grow in the medium term and that this presents an opportunity for foreign suppliers including Norway.

We note the tremendous investment that has gone into Norwegian gas infrastructure, including the expansion at Nyhamna and the new Polarled pipeline. The Aasta Hansteen field which came on stream last month is now producing Arctic gas that reaches the UK market.

We believe that gas has a place in the UK Clean Growth Strategy. This is our blueprint to cut carbon emissions, protect the environment, meet our domestic and international climate change obligations, and drive economic growth.

Low carbon innovation is at the heart of our approach, with over £2.5 billion in government investment from 2015 to 2021.

The Clean Growth Strategy sets out British policies and aspirations up to 2032 and beyond across the economy. It encompasses housing, business, transport, the natural environment and green finance. And there is a big focus on continuing to decarbonise the heat and power sectors.

So what have we achieved so far?

Since 1990, the UK has cut emissions by over 40 per cent while our economy has grown by two thirds. Our shift from coal to gas and renewables accounts for this.

20 years ago, around 2% of our electricity came from renewable sources. Last year renewables accounted for 33% compared with only 5% of power generation from coal.

We are committed to clean, smart, flexible power – Investing in renewables such as offshore wind. This is an area where the UK and Norway already have a strong partnership with significant Norwegian investment in the UK, which now has the largest installed offshore wind capacity in the world.

Through the Clean Growth Strategy, we have also set out a new ambitious approach to technology and innovation, including Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage (CCUS).

As part of this, we want to work with other Governments and industry to reduce its costs and accelerate its global deployment. I know that Norway shares this ambition, so we were delighted by the strong Norwegian participation last November in a high-level international Summit on CCUS, co-hosted by the UK and International Energy Agency.

CCUS is one of the technology solutions that could make gas a viable energy source for the long term and consistent with our climate change goals. The UK is looking at the potential for gas conversion to hydrogen using CCUS to provide clean energy. Trials are underway in Leeds to determine if hydrogen can be used in heat networks. Norway is playing a part in this research with involvement by Equinor.

Our policies for decarbonising the economy are happening as the UK prepares to leave the European Union.
This diplomatic forum provides an opportunity for me to share UK ambitions for energy relations with our European partners.

As our Prime Minister has made very clear, the UK wants to secure broad energy co-operation with the EU, ensuring that energy trading continues as efficiently as possible with the EU to underpin our future economic partnership. Energy is an area in which there is no doubt that we all share a strong alignment of interests. We have been a leading advocate for the development of the internal market in energy since the early 1990s when we were one of the first countries in the world to liberalise the energy market.

We want this to continue. We have a mutual interest in agreeing broad energy cooperation given our geographic proximity. Broad cooperation can lead to reduced emissions, lower energy bills and increased security of supply, and will accelerate the transition to a low carbon economy and help to deliver both the UK’s and the EU’s energy and climate objectives.

But whatever the exact nature UK’s future energy relationship with EU, we are in no doubt about the importance of our energy partnership with Norway.

Norway already plays a pivotal role in Europe’s gas supply security – meeting around 20% of all of Europe’s demand, and will continue to do so in the future as we require more imported gas.

We are already seeing the growth of the European gas pipeline network underway, solid plans for new routes as well as bringing new supply from harder to reach areas. Expansion further north is bringing new supplies that the UK sees as positive for energy security and long-term gas supply to the British market – and growing our energy partnership with Norway.

More broadly, we have shared interests in the North Sea – underpinned by our established bilateral agreements. Norway is a valued investor in UK wind projects. And we are looking forward to the completion of the North Sea Link Electricity Interconnector, which we believe will benefit both Norway and the UK.

In closing, I would like to thank Gassco for the invitation to share these reflections and the NHO for hosting this diplomatic forum.

News story: Theatres Trust Reappointments

Richard Baldwin

Richard is a chartered quantity surveyor by background and has over 40 years' experience in the UK and global construction market where he was responsible for the successful delivery of numerous high-profile projects. Richard is Head of Development at Derwent London. Derwent London is one of London's most innovative office specialist property regenerators and investors and has a strong record of quality architecture with a distinctive design led ethos. They now have an actively managed portfolio of 5.5 million sq. ft. valued at £5.0bn as at 30 June 2018. Richard is a fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Royal Society of Arts. Richard has recently been engaged by the Marylebone Cricket Club on the Estates Committee and he is also currently engaged by the Royal Academy of Arts on the Client Committee. Richard is a trustee of the Architectural Association Foundation. Richard was appointed by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport as a Trustee of the Theatres Trust on 1 January 2016

Patrick Dillon

Paddy Dillon is noted as a theatre architect and conservationist, and as a writer and broadcaster. He headed Haworth Tompkins's architectural team for the award-winning regeneration of the National Theatre, and before that led the regeneration of Snape Maltings. He was a director at Allies and Morrison

Architects and is now an independent architect and consultant. He sits on the casework committee of the Twentieth century Society, and chairs the editorial board of ITEAC. His publications include a monograph on the National Theatre and a children's history of architecture. Paddy Dillon became a Trustee on 1 January 2016.

These reappointments has been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments. The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Under the Code, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election. Richard and Patrick have declared no such activity.

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News story: Director of Funding appointment and new single Funding Operations Centre of Excellence

Following a competitive recruitment process, to recruit a new Director of Funding to lead a new Funding Centre of Excellence, I am pleased to announce that Kate Josephs has been appointed and will start with us in April.

Kate is currently Director of National Operations for Academies and Regional Delivery within the Department for Education (DfE). She will bring with her extensive knowledge in performance management, performance improvement and public service delivery.

Educated at The London School of Economics and Political Science and the University of Oxford Kate is a highly professional leader of policy and operations and has a wealth of experience in US and UK national governments, having worked in senior roles in HM Treasury, the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit and also in time spent working for the United states federal government during the Obama administration.

Kate will report to myself and be part of the ESFA's executive team. She will lead and oversee the creation and operation of a single Funding Centre of Excellence that is solely responsible for all schools, academies and post-16 funding. This includes the allocation of all schools and academies funding including the national funding formula, the post-16 funding agenda, apprenticeships funding and adults skills funding. She will be responsible for allocating over £58 billion of funding, representing one of the single biggest funding operations anywhere in government.

The new single Funding Centre of Excellence will bring together existing functions to deliver an excellent and expert funding service. The centre will be responsible for the development, implementation and maintenance of an ever more efficient system across the agency with potential to grow and develop the scope of work undertaken still further.

There are no current plans to recruit staff to this new function, vacancies will be filled through existing posts.

I am thrilled to join the ESFA and take on this important new role. I look forward to building upon the already excellent skills and expertise that exist within the teams who deliver such a significant funding operation, and working with service users and our stakeholders to create a truly 21st century funding system.

Our job is to make it as straightforward as possible for schools, trusts, colleges and work-based learning providers to engage with us and, whilst we do this, provide rigorous scrutiny and oversight to ensure that every pound of public money spent is invested wisely.