

Press release: New laws to set out UK and Wales trading future

The UK Government took an important step to minimise disruption and offer certainty to Welsh businesses and trading partners today taking forward the next two Brexit Bills to Parliament.

The UK Government has been working closely with the Welsh Government at all levels to ensure trade policy works for Wales and that businesses there will continue to benefit from existing trade deals after the UK leaves the EU.

The Bills will look to support Wales' growing exports, 61% of which went to non-EU countries in 2016, and foreign investment. In the last year alone, foreign investment created over 2,500 jobs from 85 new projects.

Key measures in the Trade Bill include provisions for the UK to implement existing EU trade agreements, ensuring UK companies can continue to access major government contracts in other countries and creating a new trade remedies body to defend UK businesses against unfair and injurious trade practices.

Further tax-related elements of the UK's trade policy will be legislated in the Treasury's Customs Bill – Taxation (Cross-border Trade) Bill – as part of the creation of a new UK tariff regime. This includes the trade remedies and unilateral trade preferences which provide preferential trade access to UK markets for developing countries.

Following a recent meeting with the Welsh Government in Cardiff, the International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox welcomed the commitments as part of the new legislation to work with the Welsh Government to create trade policies which work for Wales' businesses and consumers.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

There has never been a better time for Welsh companies to trade and export overseas and this Bill will provide businesses with stability and certainty to continue doing so.

We now have the opportunity to shape our own ambitious trade and investment opportunities in Europe and beyond, and put Wales and Britain firmly at the forefront of global trade and investment.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

This Bill will ensure that we support Wales' extensive global trade, reaching out to growing international markets, with 61% of its exports going beyond the EU, while supporting its existing

trade partners.

We want Wales to trade across the world on a level playing field and this Bill provides that, enabling us to continue our existing trade agreements and manage our own customs for the whole of the UK.

Trade Bill

The Trade Bill laid in Parliament today will:

- Create powers to assist in the transition of over 40 existing trade agreements between the EU and other countries;
- Enable the UK to have continued access to £1.3 trillion worth of government contracts and procurement opportunities in 47 countries – by becoming an independent member of the Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA);
- Establish a new independent UK body, the Trade Remedies Authority, to defend UK businesses against trade fluctuations and unfair trade practices; and
- Ensure the UK Government has the legal abilities for gathering and sharing trade information, as evidence to support UK businesses against surges in imports and unfair practices.

Customs Bill

The government also laid resolutions for the Customs Bill, which will enter Parliament shortly. The Bill will allow the government to create a standalone customs regime and amend the VAT and excise regimes including allowing the government to:

- Charge and vary customs duty on goods;
 - Specify which goods pay what duty;
 - Set preferential or additional duties in certain circumstances – for example, to support developing countries; and
 - Maintain a functioning movement of goods from the day we leave the EU by continuing the VAT and excise regimes in line with the final deal reached in negotiations.
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Press release: Third-year engineering apprentices graduate to roles in Dstl

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory's (Dstl's) third-year engineering apprentices have recently graduated with every single apprentice being retained by Dstl and going on to take up roles across the business.

As the recently graduated apprentices all go on to jobs within the organisation, 20 more apprentices will be joining the scheme, taking the total number currently on the programme to 53.

The 5 apprentices who successfully completed the course; Cameron Fitze, Ben Churchill, Jamie Moore, Ewan Walker and Zac Hall, have [collected awards](#) at a number of competitions, including the prestigious Tom Nevard Memorial Competition.

The team also worked with schools to talk about the benefits of doing an apprenticeship, resulting in more than 100 applicants for the 2017 intake of engineering apprentices.

Zac Hall, 20, winner of Dstl's apprentice of the year (mechanical), said:

It's been a really good past 3 years and I've learned lots. I've come from not knowing what engineering really was, to being able to produce parts that help people out on the front line. Winning the award has been amazing – it just shows that the hard work that I've been putting in has paid off.

Dstl's outgoing Chief Executive, Jonathan Lyle, said:

The best bit of my job is to celebrate the achievements of people like this. We're absolutely committed to our apprentice scheme and it's fantastic that all 5 graduating apprentices have secured roles at Dstl. The Ministry of Defence and our other customers need the very best skills.

Dstl's apprentice scheme, now in its tenth year, brings in people of all ages and backgrounds, from school leavers to those looking for a second career or a change of direction. Applications for Dstl's 2018 apprenticeship scheme will open in January 2018. For more information, visit [Civil Service Jobs](#) or [Dstl's Facebook page](#).

Press release: Exercise Tempest tests the Environment Agency flood response ahead of winter

More than 300 metres of temporary flood defence barrier, drones and new visual mapping technology are being put to the test today (7th November) as the Environment Agency continues preparation for the winter ahead.

Exercise Tempest will see frontline staff test out temporary barriers in Stratford-upon-Avon – birthplace of William Shakespeare – for the first time. The exercise will test working arrangements with the local council and partners so that barriers can be put up quickly and safely when needed to help to protect properties on the waterfront from flooding.

Staff on-site and in the Environment Agency's incident room in Lichfield will also be working together to test new visual mapping technology which will provide better intelligence about flood damage and impacts on the ground. This includes drones that teams can use to survey wider flood-hit areas, sending footage via a live feed, to the Environment Agency incident room.

Up and down the country, the Environment Agency is prepared to take action this winter wherever it is needed.

Sir James Bevan, chief executive of the Environment Agency, said:

This test exercise is one of many across the country to make sure we are ready for winter. We have 6,500 trained staff ready to respond to flooding and we're making the most of new kit and technology.

Since the flooding of winter 2015/16, the Environment Agency has invested £12.5 million in new equipment including an additional 20 miles of temporary barriers, 500,000 sandbags and 250 pumps. The use of drones will also allow us to have a clearer idea of flood damage on the ground.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

This exercise is a brilliant example of work taking place across the country to make sure we are fully prepared for any potential flooding this winter.

The use of new hi-spec equipment such as drones and live 'visual mapping' to show flood affected areas will be a huge asset to flood prevention teams.

The investment we have made in new technology, portable barriers and other equipment forms part of the £2.5 billion we are spending across the country up until 2021 to better protect over 300,000 properties.

Temporary barriers are just one of the ways the Environment Agency aims to better protect people and properties. But it's important to remember people can never be fully protected against flooding, which is why people are being urged to [go online](#) and check their flood risk by entering their postcode, and find out what they can do to protect themselves and their property when flooding hits.

More than 1.2 million people are signed up to the Environment Agency's free flood warning service, which sends a message directly by voice message, text or email when a flood warning is issued.

From 2015 to 2021, Government is investing £2.5 billion in flood and coastal erosion risk management projects which will reduce the risk of flooding from rivers, the sea, groundwater and surface water for at least 300,000 homes.

[News story: Pubs Code Adjudicator tenant survey](#)

The Pubs Code Adjudicator launches a tenant survey which is live until the end of November.

The Pubs Code Adjudicator (PCA) has commissioned an independent research company, GfK, to undertake a survey of the tied pub tenants whose pub-owning businesses are one of the six covered by the Pubs Code. The purpose of the survey is to assess tenants' awareness of the Pubs Code and its provisions; and to get their views on how it is working in practice for them.

GfK will be surveying a representative sample of tied pub tenants throughout November. The survey will be a telephone interview and should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Not all tenants will be contacted, but all six of the pub-owning businesses support the aims of the survey and would encourage tied pub tenants to take part if approached.

All responses will be confidential and non-attributable. The results of the research will be published by the PCA. We expect this to be in the New Year.

News story: International experts share decommissioning expertise

Hosted by the NDA, the project was set up by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the wake of the accident at the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power station in Japan, but is also drawing lessons from decommissioning at other nuclear sites, including:

- Al Tuwaitha nuclear site in Iraq, damaged during conflict
- Three Mile Island Unit 2 in the US, damaged by a partial core melt
- Chernobyl in Ukraine
- the A1 reactor in Slovakia, damaged following incorrect insertion of a new fuel element

The workshop also looked at a number of historical facilities which can face similar challenges, including:

- Sellafield's First Generation Magnox Storage Pond (FGMSP)
- the industrial Uranium Graphite Reactors in Russia
- the redundant fuel cycle facilities at Marcoule, France

Three working groups are studying the above cases and their conclusions will feed in to a final report, providing guidance that could be deployed in the event of future accidents. Their focus is on the challenges faced by regulators, the technical challenges of managing physical and radiological hazards and the strategic decision-making processes.

Named DAROD (Decommissioning And Remediation of Damaged nuclear facilities), the project began in 2014 as a result of the IAEA's Action Plan on Nuclear Safety, drawn up following the Fukushima-Daiichi accident.

John Rowat, from IAEA's Department of Nuclear Safety and Security, said:

The purpose of DAROD is to identify where existing guidance for normal decommissioning and remediation can be adapted to situations involving damaged nuclear facilities, and to identify how member states might be better prepared to manage such situations in the future.

At the Penrith workshop, a special session was held on Sellafield's FGMSP, introduced by Sellafield's Head of Programme Delivery for Legacy Ponds, Dorothy Gradden, who gave an update on progress at the facilities. Delegates were also given an opportunity to tour the FGMSP, enabling them understand the challenges and see the progress at first hand.

John Mathieson, the NDA's Head of International Relations, said:

The workshop brought together a diverse range of regulators and decommissioning practitioners from around the world, many of whom have first-hand experience of dealing with damaged nuclear facilities.

It was an honour for the UK and NDA to be asked to host this workshop for this important project, and the discussions were extremely valuable.