

Press release: Calstock flood defence improvements

The existing Calstock flood embankment was improved in the 1980s following a significant flood in the village. It still plays an important role in reducing flood risk in Calstock, but requires periodic repairs.

In 2012/13 the Environment Agency carried out emergency work on just over 100 metres of the embankment. This work incorporated less than 10% of the total embankment length, but cost in excess of £300,000. Maintaining the current embankment in its existing location on a 'patch and repair basis' is not sustainable.

The Environment Agency is now looking at ways to continue to manage flood risk in the village. Likely options will include moving the existing embankment inland away from the river where it will be under less pressure from erosion.

Project manager Dan Boswell said:

It's our priority to do everything we can to protect people from flooding.

Unfortunately the current embankment is no longer viable so we have to look at other options to maintain the current level of flood protection for Calstock. One of the options involves moving the existing embankment inland.

In addition to flood risk management benefits, moving the embankment would enable the creation of reed-bed habitat attracting additional wildlife. It is important to note that we are looking at all options which may be available to us. We will be talking to the community about these before final decisions are made.

The Environment Agency is looking to work with local partners to ensure that people can still use this area recreationally. Currently the Environment Agency has granted a permissive footpath across the embankment and they are keen that the footpath should continue in some form, but this will require the collaboration of local partners.

Over the next few months the Environment Agency's consultants will be carrying out ground investigations and topographic surveys to help them develop suitable options. When they have developed these the Environment Agency will arrange a drop-in session in Calstock for the community to come along and view and comment on proposals. This is likely to take place in the autumn.

The Environment Agency is spending more than £2.5 billion to build flood

schemes around the country, which will better protect 300,000 homes by 2021.

[Press release: Parole Board Annual Report and Accounts 2016/17](#)

The Parole Board has today published its Annual Report and Accounts for 2016/17.

PDF, 1.64MB, 104 pages

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“The Parole Board is making good progress after a difficult period but there is still more to do.” said Professor Nick Hardwick, Chair of the Parole Board for England and Wales.

He said: “At the start of our 50th anniversary year I am pleased to report significant improvement in the Board’s performance although I do not underestimate the work there is still to do. Our backlog of cases is down, waiting times are down, the number of prisoners serving a sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) still in custody is down, over 100 new members have been recruited, and we have successfully moved from paper to digital systems.

“None of this progress is yet complete but much has been achieved and I am confident it will continue to be so.”

The 50th anniversary of the Parole Board is in 2017/18 and the report looks back at how the Board has developed over that period as well as providing a detailed look at the Board’s work in 2016/17.

Martin Jones, the Chief Executive of the Parole Board said: “Deciding whether it is necessary to keep someone in prison to protect the public is a vital, but sometimes difficult decision. It is a job that requires good judgement to make decisions based on an assessment of the evidence.

“I am enormously grateful to my members and staff, and all those involved in the system, who help us make these decisions. The Board is committed to making those decisions, as swiftly as possible, with care, humanity and courage, because we know those decisions have a massive impact on victims, prisoners and their families. “

The Board dealt with the highest number of oral hearings in its history in 2016-17:

- In 2016/17 held 7,377 oral hearings and 25,204, cases on the papers, up 6% on 2015/16
- The number of outstanding cases reduced by 17% from 2,445 to 2,033 cases.
- 1,938 IPP cases were concluded at oral hearing. The Board ordered the release of 894 IPPs (including IPP recalls) a 20% increase on the number released in 2015-16 and we released an additional 11 IPPs on the papers. The number of unreleased IPPs fell to 3,528 down 42% on its peak in June 2012.
- 104 new Parole Board members were recruited
- The proportion of oral hearings that were adjourned or deferred in 2016/2017 remained too high at 30% and this is a major priority for 2017/18.

[Press release: Government employment practices reviewer outlines “7 principles for good quality work for all”](#)

In a central London speech, alongside the Prime Minister and Business Secretary Greg Clark, Matthew Taylor, chief executive of the Royal Society of Arts, set out his blueprint for a UK economy that truly works for everyone, creating more skilled, well-paid jobs to boost the nation's earning power and productivity.

Matthew Taylor, who was commissioned last year by the Prime Minister to carry out this review called for a fresh look to be taken at employment laws to make it easier for workers to understand and access their rights.

Matthew Taylor said:

Our national performance on the quantity of work is strong. But quantity alone is not enough for a thriving economy and fair society. We believe now is the time to complement that commitment to creating jobs with the goal of creating better jobs.

The Review calls on the government to adopt the ambition that all work should be fair and decent with scope for fulfilment and development.

Despite the impact of the National Living Wage and tax credits, there will always be people who are in work but finding it hard to make ends meet. Our social contract with those people should include dignity at work and the realistic scope to progress in the labour market.

Bad work – insecure, exploitative, controlling – is bad for health and wellbeing, something that generates cost for vulnerable individuals but also for wider society.

As many business leaders recognise, low quality work and weak management is implicated in our productivity challenge. Improving the quality of work should be an important part of our productivity strategy.

Technology – like robotics and machine learning – is going to have a big impact on jobs and the tasks that make up those jobs. As we seize these technological opportunities – as we must – we should do so with the aim of making working lives better, taking away the drudgery and leaving the human contact and creativity that machines can't provide.

If we want citizens who are engaged, responsible, active, who – to coin a phrase – 'take back control' we should encourage those same virtues in the workplace. Our idea of what it is to be a respected citizen should not stop at the office or factory door.

Prime Minister Theresa May launched the Taylor Review in [a speech at the Royal Society of Arts](#).

The government will now be engaging with stakeholders across the country, including those who represent employers and employees, to understand their views ahead of publishing a full government response later in the year.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

We have record numbers of people in work thanks to our flexible labour market.

Being in work is important but people also deserve to be treated fairly by their employers whatever work they are carrying out.

I'd like to thank Matthew Taylor and his expert panel for conducting such a thorough and detailed review. We will be engaging people and organisations across the country to continue this important debate.

Through our Industrial Strategy, we will make sure wherever people are in the country, there are more skilled, well-paid jobs to increase productivity and earning power, benefiting both workers and business.

If you have any questions or comments about the Taylor Review, please contact modernemploymentreview@beis.gov.uk.

Speech: “We have to invest in good work,” – Theresa May’s speech at Taylor Review launch

A year ago, I stood outside Downing Street for the first time as Prime Minister, and I set out the defining characteristics of the government I was determined to lead.

A clear understanding that the EU referendum result was not just a vote to leave the European Union, but a deeper and more profound call for change across our country.

A belief that at the heart of that change must lie a commitment to greater fairness in our country as we tackle the injustices and vested interests that threaten to hold us back, and make Britain a country that works for everyone, not just a privileged few.

And a determination to address difficult issues and take big decisions in the long-term interests of Britain, so that we emerge from this period of great national change stronger and better able to seize the opportunities ahead as we fulfil the promise of Brexit together.

And though the result of last month’s general election was not what I wanted, those defining beliefs remain; my commitment to change in Britain is undimmed; my belief in the potential of the British people and what we can achieve together as a nation remains steadfast; and the determination I have to get to grips with the challenges posed by a changing world never more sure.

I am convinced that the path that I set out in my first speech outside Number 10, and upon which we have set ourselves as a government, remains the right one.

It will lead to the stronger, fairer Britain that we need. It will deliver the change people want. It will ensure we make the most of this opportunity to ask ourselves what kind of country we want to be and to answer that question with confidence, optimism and hope.

That is why I am so grateful to Matthew for the report he is publishing today.

Because the issues it confronts go right to the heart of the government’s

agenda and right to the heart of our values as a people.

The nature of employment is central both to our national economic success, but also to the lives we all lead. From the end of our childhoods until the years of retirement, if we don't win the National Lottery jackpot, the vast majority of us will expect to devote at least half of our waking hours, on most days of the week, to work. A good job can be a genuine vocation, providing intellectual and personal fulfilment, as well as economic security.

With good work can come dignity and a sense of self-worth. It can promote good mental and physical health, and emotional well-being.

And our motivations for going out to work are deeply personal. It is how we provide for ourselves and our families. It's how we pay the mortgage or the rent to keep a roof over our heads, how we put food on the table and provide for our old age.

And as Matthew says in his report, 'work is a pathway out of poverty'.

Think of the household where a mum or dad, a brother or sister, or a grandchild moves into employment. They can gain the security of a regular wage, the opportunity to plan for the future. A child can grow up seeing a parent go out to work every day, and inwardly form the expectation that they will do the same.

Imagine that child a few years later, taking the step from education into employment and starting her working life on the front foot. She is setting herself on the road to a fulfilling career and a happier life.

Imagine her father, who might have been unemployed for years, who might have given up all hope of working again, getting a job thanks to the tailored support of Universal Credit. He will have helped himself, his family and the whole country.

That is the real value of work, and we should never lose sight of it.

At the same time we will always back enterprising small and medium-sized business owners. They are people who take risks with their own economic security in order to start and grow a business, contribute to our national success and provide employment to other people.

They don't play it safe – they put faith in their talent and hard work and take a chance. When they succeed, we all benefit.

So as aspiration becomes reality, as an idea becomes an invoice, we will back those who dare to dream and who dare to think big.

And my message to them is clear and unequivocal – we respect the work you do and we will always be on your side when you do the right thing.

Our task, informed by the work of Matthew and his team, is to make sure that the high standards of our best employers become the benchmark against which all employers are judged.

As the world of work changes, our practices and laws must properly reflect and accommodate those changes. Because good work is in the interests of good business.

We know that flexible working opportunities help to ensure that employers don't miss out on the talents and skills of those who would otherwise be unable to fit with the regular nine to five.

That investment in learning and progression for staff is not just valuable for employees, but also helps to boost productivity.

If we are to deliver our vision for Britain as a high-wage, high-skill economy then we know that we have to invest in good work.

As a government, we will always be on the side of hard workers and good employers. Just look at our record to date:

We have introduced for the first time a National Living Wage, giving 1.5 million workers the fastest pay rise in 20 years.

We have created a new director for Labour Market enforcement to stamp out exploitation and help protect workers' rights.

We have banned exclusivity clauses in zero hours contracts, to ensure that people always have the freedom to take on other work.

We have extended the right to flexible working and introduced shared parental leave, so both parents can spend time with their children in those important early months, but also carry on with their careers.

We have worked with business to ensure there are more women on boards than ever before, and are working with them again to take further steps to improve corporate governance.

All while at the same time the number of people in work is up by 2.9 million.

The unemployment rate is the lowest it has been since 1975.

And there are now over 800,000 fewer workless households since 2010 – a reduction of 21 per cent.

Youth unemployment is down 375,000 since 2010 – and long-term youth unemployment has halved.

That is the record of this government, and a record of which I am proud.

It's important to remember that almost three-quarters of the rise in employment over the last seven years has been in full-time jobs, and two-thirds of the jobs created since 2010 have been permanent positions.

But we do know that our experiences of work and employment are changing and that, driven by technology, they will go on changing in the years ahead.

For many, the traditional model of a full-time job with one employer is still

the norm, but for others, newer and more flexible forms of work are increasingly common.

That is why I commissioned Matthew to produce this report for the government.

The result is a substantial piece of work, and I want to thank Matthew and his fellow panel members for producing it.

They have travelled up and down the country – as you heard from Matthew – and spoken at length to workers and businesses to get an informed picture.

Their work will make a major contribution to the much-needed public debate on this issue.

What is clear from Matthew's report is that our response to the changing world of work cannot be to try to stop the clock.

Much of our success is built on the fact that we are an open, innovative economy, and we must remain that way. Indeed, one of the key findings of Matthew's report is that there is a great deal of good in 'the British way' – the model of employment we have here in Great Britain.

Its flexibility and responsiveness, alongside clear and consistent protections for employees and workers, are all sources of strength, and in responding to changes in the labour market, we must do nothing which weakens them.

But as the report also highlights – that flexibility cannot be one-sided, with workers shouldering the requirement to be available for work at very short notice, without any guarantee that work will actually be available or that they will be rewarded for their flexibility.

So while Matthew's report is clear that many workers value the flexibility that zero hours contracts offer them, and that banning such contracts altogether would harm more people than it would help, it is important that we continue to ensure that employers do not use these contracts to exploit people.

In other areas we may need to look again at where the law has not kept up with modern working practices, like for those who make use of platform working.

But just as often it can be a case of making sure that existing laws are properly understood and enforced.

For example, employing unpaid interns as workers to avoid paying the National Minimum Wage is illegal, but we need to make sure that employers and interns alike are clear on the rules.

And I absolutely share Matthew's ambition that all work should be fair and decent, with scope for development and fulfilment.

As Matthew says, good work and plentiful work can and should go together. The

quantity of jobs remains vital, but quality matters too.

Because work is such a central aspect of most of our lives, we should also care about how people are treated when they are at work, whether they feel safe and secure, with the opportunity to get on and make progress.

So, we will study this report's contents carefully over the summer and respond in detail later in the year, but in the meantime let me set out some of the key principles which will guide us as we act to make employment fairer and more secure.

When it comes to taking action, I am determined that we do so in a fair way – fair to all workers and fair to businesses too.

We will build on the strengths of our labour market – what Matthew calls 'the British way'.

While avoiding overbearing regulation, we will make sure people have the rights and protections they need. That means building on our high employment rate and low unemployment rate – and continuing to strive for full employment.

It means retaining the flexibility that people value, and recognising that most employers treat their staff not just fairly but well.

It means remaining a home to innovation, new ideas and new business models, and recognising the risks and difficulties which those striving to build their own business face – not just on day one, but every day.

But it also means finding the right balance of rights and responsibilities, flexibilities and protections.

For business, it means taking their responsibilities seriously, and listening to their employees.

For government, it means increasing the National Living Wage so that people who are on the lowest pay see their wages go up as the economy strengthens, as well as supporting people to get into work and to make progress in their careers.

For us all, it means supporting people to live fuller working lives, and helping employers to retain the valuable skills and experience of older workers.

And because disability or a health condition should never dictate the path a person is able to take in their working life, it means helping everyone to progress in work, to get on, and to go as far as their talents will take them.

It will take time and a broad public debate to determine exactly the right action to take to ensure that we are living by all of these principles, and we will listen to all contributions to that debate.

But I am clear that the government will act to ensure that the interests of employees on traditional contracts, the self-employed and those people working in the 'gig' economy are all properly protected.

This report will provide the stimulus for that work across the range of employment types.

When I commissioned this report I led a majority government in the House of Commons. The reality I now face as Prime Minister is rather different.

In this new context, it will be even more important to make the case for our policies and our values, and to win the battle of ideas both in Parliament as well as in the country.

So I say to the other parties in the House of Commons – read this report, engage with the difficult issues it raises, come forward with your own views and ideas about how we can tackle these challenges as a country.

We may not agree on everything, but through debate and discussion – the hallmarks of our Parliamentary democracy – ideas can be clarified and improved and a better way forward found.

It is in that spirit that we will take this agenda forward in the months ahead.

And this new context presents us as a government with a wider choice.

At this critical time in our history, we can either be timid or we can be bold.

We can play it safe or we can strike out with renewed courage and vigour, making the case for our ideas and values and challenging our opponents to contribute, not just to criticise.

I think this country needs a government that is prepared to take the bold action necessary to secure a better future for Britain and we are determined to be that government.

In everything we do, we will act with an unshakeable sense of purpose to build the better, fairer Britain which we all want to see.

Press release: Special delivery for Kielder Salmon Centre

Two giant new fish tanks have been delivered to the hatchery at the Environment Agency's Kielder Salmon Centre.

The fibre glass tanks, which measure 9 metres across by 1.5 metres deep, weigh more than 500kg and can hold 50,000 litres of water each, will be the final stop for thousands of young salmon before they are released into tributaries of the River Tyne.

The old tanks had been in use since the hatchery opened in 1980, and were at risk of failing and flooding the nearby office and visitor centre.

Young salmon will be 'stronger and fitter'

Richard Bond, manager of Kielder Salmon Centre, said:

It was a relief to see the new tanks arrive safely, and our young salmon will be stronger and fitter in future because of the improved conditions we can now provide.

During the summer and autumn months up to 150,000 small fish aged between four to eight months will be stored in each tank.

There are only two manufacturers of tanks this size in the UK, so they had to be brought on a long road trip from Aberdeen down to the salmon centre.

Specialist fitters were given the job of installing the £200,000 tanks on to concrete bases, specially strengthened to support the eventual 128 tonne weight of the tanks when filled.

The new concrete slab was laid with space and water supplies for five smaller tanks which it's hoped will be installed in future as the work of the hatchery expands.

Kielder Salmon Centre is run by the Environment Agency and is open to visitors every day from April to September from 10am until 4pm. Visitors can take a self-guided tour to discover some incredible facts about the wild salmon, endangered freshwater mussels which are also looked after at the hatchery, and other interesting species in their local environment.