

Press release: Low Pay Commission visit to Newport and Gwent

The visit to Newport and Gwent in June is part of a programme of visits the Low Pay Commission (LPC) is making around the UK during 2017 to gather information on how the National Living Wage is operating.

Peter Donaldson and Professor Sarah Brown will meet a number of representatives in Newport and Gwent to hear first hand what impact the National Living Wage is having on businesses and workers.

Low Pay Commissioner Peter Donaldson said:

Hearing directly from those affected by the National Living Wage and other minimum wage rates is an important part of the Commission's work and informs our recommendations to the government. Our visits take us around the UK and we welcome the opportunity to hear how the National Living Wage has affected people in Wales.

Notes:

1. The Low Pay Commission is an independent body that advises the government about the National Living Wage and the National Minimum Wage.
2. The LPC is responsible for:
 - carrying out extensive research and consultation, and commissioning research projects
 - analysing relevant data and actively encouraging the Office of National Statistics to establish better estimates of the incidence of low pay
 - carrying out surveys of firms in low-paying sectors
 - consulting with employers, workers and their representatives and taking written and oral evidence from a wide range of organisations
 - making fact-finding visits throughout the UK to meet employers, employees and representative organisations
3. There are 9 Low Pay Commissioners drawn from a range of employee, employer and academic backgrounds:
 - Bryan Sanderson
 - Kay Carberry
 - Neil Carberry
 - Professor Richard Dickens
 - Peter Donaldson
 - Professor Sarah Brown
 - Clare Chapman
 - John Hannett
 - Brian Strutton
4. All the Commissioners serve in an individual capacity. They are

supported by a secretariat, which has 8 members of staff and is based in London.

5. If you are involved in a business, are a worker, or have information you would like to share with commissioners about the effects of the National Living Wage or Minimum Wage, and would like to meet the Commissioners, please contact the LPC secretariat using the contact details below.

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[Press release: Additional responsibilities for Medicines Discovery Catapult](#)

Catapult to be centre for medicines; diagnostics; biomarkers; trial support.

The board of directors of the Medicines Discovery Catapult (MDC) and the Precision Medicine Catapult (PMC) have proposed the transfer of some aspects of the scientific mission of PMC to the MDC.

MDC will now focus on: medicines; diagnostics; biomarkers; early-stage clinical trial support. They believe the move reflects the change in precision medicine becoming mainstream and integrated within modern drug discovery, and will drive efficiencies and serve as a community one-stop shop for all drug-based approaches. The PMC will close as an entity in its own right.

This proposal is endorsed by Innovate UK under its commitment to developing targeted and efficient innovation support through its network of Catapults throughout the UK.

To deliver a more distributed approach to precision medicine and with reduced need for a centralised resource, Innovate UK will instead use its funding to maintain its support for the precision medicine sector, providing funding for competitive grants open to applications from businesses and precision medicine regional centres of excellence from all over the UK.

This will provide many expert groups with the capability to set their own strategies beyond the previous constraints of the PMC.

Contact PJ Taylor, media and stakeholder communications partner, for more information: 07950 225 001 or email pj.taylor@innovateuk.gov.uk.

[Press release: UK takes centre stage in global marine protection](#)

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey has today set out how the UK continues to play a leading role in protecting the world's oceans and turning the tide on marine litter.

Speaking in Cork for the 25th annual meeting of the [OSPAR Commission](#) – an international convention to protect the marine environment of the north-east Atlantic – the Minister outlined how the UK is leading international efforts to tackle plastic pollution, protect marine species and habitats, and support cutting-edge marine science.

Earlier this month the UK made a number of voluntary commitments at the first-ever [United Nations Ocean Conference](#) in New York. These include joining the UN's Clean Seas campaign to reduce the use of disposable plastic by 2022, strengthening global ocean observations, and working with Overseas Territories to protect the diverse range of marine life in their waters.

Speaking at the meeting, Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

The UK continues to be a global leader in protecting beaches, oceans and marine life around the world.

Our seas are critical to the future of our planet – they supply the oxygen we breathe, absorb the carbon dioxide we produce, and provide us with a magnificent array of marine species and habitats. That's why we must act now to protect them for future generations.

The introduction of the 5p plastic bag charge was a great step

forward – cutting the number of bags found on beaches by nearly half – and alongside our work to ban harmful microbeads, reduce plastic packaging, and create a series of marine protected areas, I am determined for us to remain a heavy-hitter on the marine world stage.

Today's meeting of the OSPAR Commission, jointly co-hosted by the Environment Minister and Ireland's Minister of State for Housing and Urban Renewal, Damien English, brings together 15 countries across Europe to set out ongoing work to create a network of marine protected areas and launch a new report on the status of marine species and habitats in the north-east Atlantic.

Through OSPAR, the UK and neighbouring countries have developed and are implementing a Regional Action Plan on marine litter. This covers 55 actions to address land-based and sea-based sources of litter, including education and awareness activities, marine monitoring, and removing litter that has already reached the marine environment.

At the UN Ocean Conference the [UK reiterated its continued commitment](#) to conserving and sustainably using the world's seas – one of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to tackle poverty, end hunger and protect the environment.

[News story: CMA applies discretion not to refer IBA/Mallinckrodt merger](#)

The CMA is not referring the merger between IBA and Mallinckrodt's global nuclear imaging business for an in-depth investigation.

The companies both supply single photon emission computed tomography (SPECT) radiopharmaceuticals in the UK. These are used to diagnose disease in many different tissues and organs including bones, the brain, heart, kidneys, liver, and lungs.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has found that in one category of SPECT products supplied by the companies the merger will reduce the number of suppliers from 3 to 2 and this could substantially lessen competition. However, the size of the relevant market is below £5 million and the CMA has not found reasons to warrant an in-depth phase 2 investigation. Therefore, the CMA has decided to apply its statutory discretion not to refer this case.

This is the first case in which the CMA has exercised its discretion not to make a reference for this reason since publishing [revised guidance on 16 June](#).

For more information, please see the [case page](#).

News story: Update on procurement for non-levy paying employers

In April 2017, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) paused the procurement for apprenticeship training provision for non-levy-paying employers.

The competition was markedly oversubscribed and the Department for Education (DfE) and the ESFA concluded that it did not achieve the right balance between stability of provision, promoting competition and choice for employers. Together, DfE and ESFA have since reviewed their approach to determine how best to support these objectives.

As a result, the ESFA has decided to cancel the current procurement exercise and has confirmed that it will launch a new procurement at the end of July.

The new procurement will be designed to achieve the best value for employers, providers and apprentices in the move to a fully employer-led system. More details on the process and deadlines will be finalised and announced shortly.

The ESFA has also confirmed that the register of apprenticeship training providers will not re-open for new applications, while the new procurement exercise is open.

To provide further clarity and certainty for training providers with existing contracts the following steps will also be taken:

1. Within the next week, the ESFA will respond to providers who have made business cases to adjust the amount of funding they were awarded in the contract extensions. Where credible evidence has been presented, the ESFA will look to adjust the allocations.
2. The ESFA will bring forward the first performance management point from August to July. This will be in order to review current delivery and consider whether additional funding can be made available where there is clear evidence of unmet demand from employers. More details on the timing for this will follow shortly.

This will not affect training provision for existing learners.