News story: The UK House Price Index marks one year of publishing

Today marks the first anniversary of publishing the UK House Price Index (UK HPI) that is calculated by HM Land Registry, the Office for National Statistics, Registers of Scotland and Land & Property Services Northern Ireland. This statistic shows the changes to the value of residential properties in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Throughout the year we've spoken to users and gathered their feedback. In September 2016, users were formally invited to evaluate the report, these responses are captured in the Summary of responses that is being used to plan index upgrades.

We have made a number of enhancements to the index during the year that is accessed by approximately 1,000 new users each month in addition to more than 6,600 regular users.

Enhancements made since review

In response to your feedback our December 2016 developments included:

- the provision of more details about our methodology in Calculating the UK HPI
- navigation improvements, such as a new link to our interactive tool from the UK HPI reports page
- new links to key sections of the About the UK HPI page, like the revision policy.

In addition February 2017, saw the first publication of our UK House Price Index annual review that compares the historic performance of the index with the UK HPI throughout 2016.

Today's enhancements

Today's enhancements are:

- we extending our revision period to 13 months from today, following a review of our revision policy (see Revisions to the UKI HPI data). This ensures the data used is more comprehensive, improving the capture of new builds.

- we will also introduce new revision tables for England and Wales within our downloadable data, so that you can easily identify and evaluate the impact of each change. Tables will be available in csv format.

- new functionality will allow you to toggle between a chart or table, depending on your preference for visual or textual information.

We've updated the information in About the UK HPI to keep you informed about the process we're undertaking to remove our experimental status. These enhancements take us a step closer towards that goal. Once removed, we can progress with our second phase of assessment as a National Statistic.

Planned enhancements

We are committed to the continued improvement of the index and aim to introduce more enhancements over the coming months. In the meantime, thank you for your valuable feedback.To enable even greater engagement we will soon create an online forum to assist ongoing conversations. In the interim, you can contact us if you have any questions.

News story: Fines of over £168,000 imposed for fisheries offences

On 7 June 2017 Kafish B.V. a Dutch company which owns the UK registered trawler Margriet LT36 and its master, Dutch national Peter Kuyt, pleaded guilty to 14 breaches of the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967 and the Fisheries Act 1981 at North Tyneside Magistrates' Court.

The court heard that during two separate investigations carried out by the MMO, Vessel Monitoring System data and logbook entries identified that the vessel had committed numerous offences between 2016 and 2017.

The first investigation showed that in 2016 the vessel had, on three occasions committed offences of fishing within a seasonal closure area and on one occasion fishing in a real time closure area.

The second investigation revealed that in 2017 a further eight offences of fishing within a seasonal closure area and another offence of failing to keep an accurate logbook were committed between January and March.

Sentencing the owner and master, District Judge Sarah-Jane Griffiths said "You have acknowledged that these were serious offences and it is surprising to me that after the offences in 2016 were brought to your attention in June you committed a further 8 offences. To me it is clear that by that time at least you knew you shouldn’t have been in those areas.”

Despite being registered in the UK and, therefore, being required to comply with a UK fishing licence, the vessel is owned by Kafish B.V., a Dutch company. They were fined £66,000, with an additional fine of £80,000 to cover the value of the fish illegally caught, £3,500 costs and a victim surcharge of £170.

The vessel master, a Dutch national named Peter Kuyt, was fined £8,536.33 with an additional fine of £15,000 to cover the value of the fish illegally caught, £741 costs and a victim surcharge of £170.

A spokesman for the MMO said:

“The court in this case has sent a clear message that these were serious offences which were aggravated by the fact that the offences were repeated on numerous occasions.

The size of the fines imposed by the court in this case shows both the scale of damage to the marine environment caused by offences of this nature and the profits made by the perpetrators of these crimes.

Fisheries offences like these are committed at the expense of the legitimate, law-abiding members of the fishing industry who rely on the sustainability of fishing grounds for their livelihoods and future.

The MMO will always take appropriate enforcement action including pursuing and bringing prosecutions to court to protect the long term viability of the marine environment for future generations.”

News story: Robotics and AI: apply in the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund

Innovate UK is making the funding available for robotics and artificial intelligence technologies in applications such as deep mining, nuclear energy, space and off-shore energy.

This is an Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund activity. It aims to develop robotics technologies that can take people out of dangerous work environments and go beyond human limits.

Demonstrator programme

There is up to £6 million available for projects that stimulate the development of robotics and artificial intelligence demonstrators.

This is the first phase of the competition. Projects should focus on technical feasibility studies of individual technologies, systems or subsystems in extreme or challenging environments.

Phase 2 will run in 2018. This will focus on experimental developments of fully-integrated systems that will be tested and demonstrated in realistic, extreme environments. To be considered to lead a project in phase 2 you must apply in phase 1.

Collaborative research and development

You can apply for a share of £10 million for collaborative research and development (R&D) that results in new and novel systems.

Projects should demonstrate a potential step-change in capabilities. Examples include:

- innovative materials or systems, for example, actuators, sensors and telecommunications
- improved robotic capabilities, such as structural and radiation tolerance
- improved machine vision systems
- improved situational awareness, navigation, localisation and mapping
- more energy-efficient devices and systems
- miniaturised systems, for example, sensors, components and integrated sub-systems
- systems engineering including verification and validation tools and methodologies
- mission planning and risk management

The focus is primarily on off-shore energy, nuclear energy, space and deep mining, however, other extreme and challenging environments may also be considered. We are particularly interested in projects that cut across sectors.

Part of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund

Robots for a Safer World – part of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund

The robots and artificial intelligence challenge is part of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund.

By developing new technologies and systems that can be deployed in extreme environments, this challenge will create a safer working world for people, as well as supporting advances in industry and public services to make them more productive.

Government will invest £93 million in this challenge area over the next 4 years.

Competition information

- both competitions are now open for applications
- in the demonstrator competition, projects should last up to 12 months and range in size up to total project costs of £500,000. The competition closes on 19 July 2017
- in the collaborative R&D competition, projects should last up to 36 months and range in size up to total project costs of £2 million. The competition closes on 2 August 2017
- all projects must be led by a business
- businesses can attract up to 70% of their project costs

News story: UK and France announce joint campaign to tackle online radicalisation

The UK and France have joined forces to tackle online radicalisation with plans that could lead to much stronger action against tech companies who fail to remove unacceptable content.

Ahead of the Prime Minister’s visit to Paris today, where she will hold talks on counter-terrorism with French President Emmanuel Macron, the UK and France have announced a new joint campaign to ensure that the internet cannot be used as a safe space for terrorists and criminals.

Crucially, plans include exploring the possibility of creating a new legal liability for tech companies if they fail to remove content. This could, for example, include penalties such as fines for companies that fail to take action. The two countries will lead joint work with the tech companies on this vital agenda, including working with them to develop tools to identify and remove harmful material automatically.

In particular, the Prime Minister and President Macron will press relevant firms to urgently establish the industry-led forum agreed at the G7 summit last month, to develop shared technical and policy solutions to tackle terrorist content on the internet.

The Home Secretary and the French Interior Minister will meet in the coming days to drive forward this important work.

Speaking ahead of her visit to Paris, the Prime Minister said:

> The counter-terrorism cooperation between British and French intelligence agencies is already strong, but President Macron and I

agree that more should be done to tackle the terrorist threat online.

In the UK we are already working with social media companies to halt the spread of extremist material and poisonous propaganda that is warping young minds.

And today I can announce that the UK and France will work together to encourage corporations to do more and abide by their social responsibility to step up their efforts to remove harmful content from their networks, including exploring the possibility of creating a new legal liability for tech companies if they fail to remove unacceptable content.

We are united in our total condemnation of terrorism and our commitment to stamp out this evil.

Press release: Heineken/Punch must resolve concerns over pub merger

Heineken must now offer proposals to address these concerns by 20 June or face an in-depth investigation into the merger.

As part of an initial investigation, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has looked in detail at areas where pubs operated by Heineken and Punch currently compete. It has identified 33 local areas where their pubs would not face sufficient competition after the merger, which could lead to price increases or a deterioration in the quality of the service on offer.

Concerns were also raised with the CMA that the merger would close off an important route to market for brewers that compete with Heineken. However, the CMA found that the pubs being acquired are only a very small part (4%) of the GB market and are therefore not a major route to market for brewers – which was backed by evidence from brewers showing that these Punch pubs typically account for only a small proportion of all of their sales to pubs.

The CMA also looked closely at whether the acquisition by Heineken could lead to a reduction in the choice of beer and cider on offer in the Punch pubs. The CMA found that any potential reduction would be limited, taking into account the drinks that Punch currently stocks and the range of drinks available in Heineken-owned pubs. It also found that Heineken would not have a strong incentive to reduce the range of beer and cider, in part because doing so would risk losing business in pubs where this is important to customers.

Andrea Coscelli, CMA Acting Chief Executive and decision maker in the case, said:

> We have listened very carefully to a range of concerns about this merger. The companies will own less than 10% of all British pubs after any deal, but we are concerned about the loss of competition for pub goers in a number of local areas. Without sufficient competition from rivals, pubs in these areas might be able to raise prices or worsen the service they offer customers.
>
> Heineken will now have the chance to offer proposals to address these concerns – otherwise we will carry out an in-depth investigation.

The merger will be referred for an in-depth phase 2 investigation by an independent group of CMA panel members, unless Heineken is able to offer undertakings which sufficiently address the CMA's competition concerns. Heineken has until 20 June 2017 to do so.

All information relating to the merger is available on the case page.

Notes for editors

1. Heineken is proposing to buy approximately 1,900 pubs from Punch Taverns.
2. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For more information see the CMA's homepage.
3. Under the Enterprise Act 2002 (the Act) the CMA has a duty to make a merger reference, resulting in an in-depth phase 2 merger investigation, if the CMA believes that it is or may be the case that a 'relevant merger situation' has been created, or arrangements are in progress or in contemplation which, if carried into effect, will result in the creation of a relevant merger situation; and that the creation of that situation has resulted, or may be expected to result, in a substantial lessening of competition within any market or markets in the United Kingdom for goods or services.
4. Under the Act a 'relevant merger situation' is created if 2 or more enterprises have ceased to be distinct enterprises; and the value of the turnover in the United Kingdom of the enterprise being taken over exceeds £70 million ('the turnover test') or as a result of the transaction, in relation to the supply of goods or services of any description, a 25% share of supply in the UK (or a substantial part of the UK) is created or enhanced ('the share of supply test').
5. The CMA considers that it is under a duty to make a phase 2 merger reference in this case under the Act. However, the duty to refer is not

exercised while the CMA is considering whether to accept undertakings in lieu of a reference.

6. All the CMA’s functions in phase 2 merger investigations are performed by inquiry groups chosen from the CMA’s panel members. The appointed inquiry group are the decision makers on merger investigations. The CMA’s panel members come from a variety of backgrounds, including economics, law, accountancy and/or business; the membership of an inquiry group usually reflects a mix of expertise and experience (including industry experience).
7. The text of this decision will be placed on the case page in due course.
8. For more information on the CMA see our homepage or follow us on Twitter @CMAgovuk, Facebook, Flickr and LinkedIn. Sign up to our email alerts to receive updates on mergers cases.
9. Media enquiries should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or by calling 020 3738 6798.