

News story: Minister Hopkins urges politics students to have their say

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Down High School pupils welcomed UK Government Minister Kris Hopkins to a meeting of the school's current affairs society today.

The Northern Ireland Office Minister gave the pupils a first-hand account of life in central and local government, drawing on his experience as a minister in central Whitehall departments and as leader of Bradford City Council.

The minister's visit was an opportunity to hear the views of Northern Ireland's young people about the current political impasse. Mr Hopkins was also keen to emphasise the vital role that politics and public service has played in making Northern Ireland a peaceful and prosperous place.

Mr Hopkins said:

"My message to the pupils today is simple: you can shape the future so get involved and have your say! Their energy was fantastic and it is good to see them engaged in the Northern Ireland political debate and showing a great interest in current affairs.

"With significant challenges facing Northern Ireland politicians it was instructive to hear the students' desire for a stronger society and a politics that works.

"It is vital we listen to their views. They are the next generation who will make a difference to the lives of people here and help build a brighter future for Northern Ireland."

News story: Industrial innovation in Jiangsu and the UK: apply for funding

Up to £5 million is available for UK businesses to work with partners in Jiangsu province on industrial challenges and opportunities.

Innovate UK has up to £5 million to invest in UK businesses working on collaborative research and development projects with partners in Jiangsu province, People's Republic of China.

This programme is being delivered according to the memorandum of understanding for Cooperation in Regional Technology and Innovation signed in 2014. [Jiangsu Science and Technology Department](#) will allocate funding for partners in China.

Funding opportunities

We are seeking projects that:

- address the challenges faced by infrastructure owners, cities, towns and users through innovation in infrastructure systems
- use transformational or disruptive innovation to create new products, processes or services drawn from any technology, engineering or industrial area. There should be a significant return on investment and a clear, anticipated impact on business growth

Projects may focus on industrial research or experimental development.

International innovation to stimulate growth

Companies that internationalise are known to have strong growth. UK entrepreneurs need to access global knowledge, markets, skills and partners to build on capabilities, grow successful businesses and address the industrial opportunities and challenges that will shape the markets of the future.

Jiangsu is one of the provinces in China with the most abundant scientific resources and innovation activities.

In this competition there should be demonstrable benefits of cooperation between the UK and China for the participants from both countries.

Competition information

- this competition is open, and the deadline for registration is 21 June 2017
 - projects must be business-led and involve at least one partner from the UK and one from Jiangsu province. Academic and research entities in the UK are eligible to join as partners
 - projects should last up to 24 months and range in size up to £500,000
 - businesses could attract up to 70% of their project costs
 - a webinar briefing event will be held for potential applicants on Friday 21 April 2017
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Press release: Updated measures to protect poultry against Avian Flu

All poultry in England are to be allowed outside from Thursday 13 April 2017 following updated evidence on the risk posed by wild birds, the UK's Chief Veterinary Officer has announced.

The requirement to keep poultry in Higher Risk Areas of England housed or completely enclosed in netting, introduced to minimise the risk of them catching avian flu from wild birds, will be lifted. However, all keepers in England will continue to be required to comply with strict biosecurity measures. A ban on poultry gatherings also remains in force until further notice.

The decision to lift the additional requirements in the Higher Risk areas is based on the latest scientific evidence and veterinary advice, which concludes that the level of risk to poultry in the Higher Risk Areas has now reduced to the same level as that across the rest of England. This is because of changes in the wild bird population: the majority of over-wintering migratory birds have now left the UK, and resident wild waterfowl are at their lowest levels and entering the breeding season when they become less likely to move long distances to forage for food.

The risk of poultry becoming infected from H5N8 remains heightened and countries across Europe continue to experience outbreaks and observe cases in wild birds. Defra is stepping up surveillance of wild birds across the UK to inform our risk assessments.

All poultry keepers must continue to take steps to reduce the risk to their birds, including minimising movement in and out of bird enclosures, cleaning footwear, keeping areas where birds live clean and tidy and feeding birds indoors.

Chief Veterinary Officer Nigel Gibbens said:

We continually review our disease control measures in light of new scientific evidence and veterinary advice. Based on the latest evidence on reduced numbers of migratory and resident aquatic wild birds we believe that kept birds in the areas we previously designated as Higher Risk are now at the same level of risk as the rest of England and may now be let outside.

However, all keepers must still observe strict disease prevention measures to reduce the risk of contamination from the environment, where the virus can survive for several weeks in bird droppings.

This does not mean business as usual: the risk from avian flu has not gone away and a Prevention Zone remains in place, requiring keepers across England to take steps to prevent disease spreading.

We continue to keep measures under review and keepers should check GOV.UK for regular updates.

Lifting the housing requirement in Higher Risk Areas means free range birds across every part of England can now be allowed outside again.

[H5N8 avian flu has been found in wild and farmed birds in the UK since December 2016](#), including chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese. Where avian flu has been confirmed, we have taken swift action to limit the spread of disease with restrictions around affected premises and full investigations to determine the source of infection.

H5N8 can be spread indirectly via the contaminated environment, for example in wild bird droppings, contaminated feed or bedding, as well as being passed from wild birds to poultry directly from bird to bird. All disease control measures continue to be kept under review depending on the latest scientific advice and disease outbreak situation.

Further information

1. Read [guidance on how to continue to comply with the Prevention Zone](#) currently in place across England.
2. Read the [latest veterinary risk assessment for Avian Influenza H5N8 in the UK and Europe](#).
3. Read more [information about the ban on gatherings](#), which remains in place.

[Press release: 6 year disqualification for Oldham director pumping illicit diesel](#)

Mr Saeed, was a director of SFS (Oldham) Limited which operated the Scouthead petrol station in Oldham, and which went into liquidation on 5 February 2016, owing £61,730 to creditors. Of this, £53,678 was owed to taxpayers as he had not been paying the full level of duty on diesel fuel sold.

The disqualification means Mr Saeed is banned from acting as a company director or from managing, or in any way controlling, a limited company from 14 April until 2023.

An Insolvency Service investigation found that between 26 March 2013 and 13 March 2015, Mr Saeed caused SFS to trade to the detriment of HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) by causing SFS to sell diesel which did not bear duty at the full rate and by causing SFS to suppress sales of illicit diesel. HMRC subsequently raised an assessment and penalty totalling a combined £58,344.

Aldona O'Hara, Chief Investigator of Insolvent Investigations Midlands & West at the Insolvency Service, said:

Company directors have a duty to ensure businesses meet their legal obligations, including paying taxes.

Neglect of tax affairs is not a victimless action as it deprives the taxpayer of the funds needed to operate public services.

Notes to editors

Mr Saeed's date of birth is July 1968 and he resides in Oldham.

SFS (Oldham) Limited (CR0 No. 08423011) was incorporated on 27 February 2013 and traded from Scouthead Filling Station, Huddersfield Road, Oldham, OL4 4AS.

Mr Saeed was the sole director from 27 February 2013 to 05 February 2016 (the date of liquidation).

The matter of unfitness, which Mr Saeed did not dispute in the Disqualification Undertaking, was that; Between 26 March 2013 and 13 March 2015 he caused SFS to sell oil which did not bear the full rate and he further caused SFS to suppress sales of illicit diesel resulting in HMRC raising an assessment and a penalty totalling a combined £58,344.

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings.

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

Press release: End of road for road haulage company director

Longcross went into Liquidation on 27 January 2015 owing at least £200,864 to creditors including £175,423 in respect of unpaid tax.

An investigation by the Insolvency Service found that Mr Davies had failed in his duty as a director to either maintain, preserve or alternatively deliver-up adequate accounting records. As a result, It was not possible to ascertain whether Mr Davies was a creditor of Longcross for £220,000, or alternatively whether he owed Longcross at least £796,479.

However, the Insolvency Service's investigation did conclude that Mr Davies purposefully withheld VAT from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) in order to keep the company trading between September 2012 and the date of Liquidation. In particular, VAT returns were not submitted to HMRC between March 2013 and October 2014. Longcross did produce a number of VAT returns, but these declared larger liabilities than assessed for the same period by HMRC, and had not been submitted.

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy accepted an eight year Disqualification Undertaking from Mr Davies, which bars him from acting as a company director or from managing, or in any way controlling, a limited company from 10 April 2017 until 2025.

Aldona O'Hara, Chief Investigator of Insolvent Investigations Midlands & West at the Insolvency Service, said:

Company directors have a duty to ensure businesses meet their legal obligations, including paying taxes and must not benefit themselves at the expense of creditors. Neglect of tax affairs is not a victimless action as it deprives the taxpayer of the funds needed to operate public services.

She added:

Directors have a duty to ensure that their companies maintain proper accounting records, and, following insolvency, deliver them to the office-holder in the interests of fairness and transparency. Without a full account of transactions it is impossible to determine whether a director has discharged his duties properly, or is using a lack of documentation as a cloak for impropriety.

Notes to editors

Gary Thomas Davies' date of birth is July 1968 and he resides in Virginia Water, Surrey.

Longcross Transport Limited (CRO No. 07153034) was incorporated on 10 February 2010 and traded from Trumps Farm, Kitsmead Lane, Longcross, Chertsey, Surrey, KT16 0EF.

Mr Davies was the sole director from 10 February 2010 to 27 January 2015 (the date of liquidation).

The matters of unfitness, which Mr Davies did not dispute in the Disqualification Undertaking, were that;

Between 28 February 2013 and 27 January 2015 he failed to ensure that Longcross maintained and/ or preserved adequate accounting records. Or in the alternative he failed to deliver up to the Liquidator such records as were maintained. Mr Davies further failed to ensure that Longcross complied with its statutory obligations to HMRC with regards to VAT and caused Longcross to trade to the detriment of HMRC from 07 September 2012 to 27 January 2015.

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property
- act as an insolvency practitioner

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings. Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a range of other restrictions.

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Contact Press Office

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