

£1.8m to help Fire and Rescue Services deal with water rescue and flooding

The Cabinet Secretary made the announcement on a visit to the Cardiff International White Water Centre, where South Wales Fire and Rescue Service personnel were undertaking water rescue training and gave a demonstration of rescues from vehicles in water, inflatable sled rescues and swift water boat rescues.

Whilst Fire and Rescue Authorities already respond to flooding and inland water rescue incidents using their existing general powers and resources, they are not required to do so. The Cabinet Secretary has therefore signed an Order which will create a statutory duty on the three Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales to respond to such incidents.

To support the introduction of the new duty, funding has been made available to replace ageing flooding and water rescue equipment, and to purchase a second high volume pump in North Wales.

The Cabinet Secretary said,

“The demonstration of water rescue skills here today clearly shows the dedication and professionalism of our firefighters. As a result of their excellent work, we have been hugely successful in reducing the risk of fire in Wales.

“Flooding can be just as hazardous as fire, and more wide-ranging. It can devastate whole communities, threaten widespread casualties, and destroy property and the environment. We need to be sure that our fire services will be ready to respond – and our firefighters need to know what is expected of them. This is why I have created a new duty on our fire and rescue services to respond to flooding or water rescue incidents which pose a direct threat of death or injury.

“They also need the equipment to do this safely and effectively. I am therefore also pleased to announce an extra £1.8 million over this financial year and the next, to enhance and update the boats, pumps and protective gear that our fire services need.”

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service’s Chief Fire Officer, Huw Jakeway said:

“It was a pleasure to welcome the Cabinet Secretary to Cardiff International White Water and for him to see our dedicated crews in action, as part of their ongoing training programme when it comes to water rescues. For us as Fire and Rescue Services in Wales, keeping our communities and firefighters safe in and around the

water has always been a priority and the new funding for equipment, over the next two financial years, will enable us to continue to serve our communities to the highest standard.”

Labour hold emergency business roundtable to discuss business rates “ticking time bomb” – Rebecca Long-Bailey

Labour

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Senior

Labour politicians met today with representatives from ten major business organisations to discuss the mounting business rates crisis.

New

rates are due to kick in on 1st April but thousands of businesses are unsure whether they will be able to pay.

Labour

joined forces with businesses to put pressure on the Government to provide emergency transitional relief for struggling businesses in the budget next week. They also agreed to begin an ongoing dialogue about how to fundamentally reform business rates in the longer run.

The

meeting followed Labour’s earlier announcement of a five point plan for business rates, which is intended to help businesses through this difficult period, and develop a system of business taxation that is fairer on businesses and local communities alike.

Labour’s

Five Point Plan for Business Rates:

1. Set up an emergency transitional relief fund for businesses facing “cliff edge” increases in their rates, and revise the appeals process to ensure businesses get a swift and fair hearing

2.
Bring forward CPI indexation so that businesses aren't paying more because of how inflation is measured
3.
Exclude new investment in plant and machinery from future business rates valuation
4.
Introduce more regular valuations in law to stop businesses facing periodic, unmanageable hikes
5. Fundamental
reform of the business rates system to ease the burden on traditional high streets and town centres in the age of online shopping; support the traditional fabric of our communities, including community pubs and incentivising free cash machines; and create a fairer system of business taxation.

**Rebecca
Long-Bailey, Shadow Business Secretary, said:**

"We've called this emergency meeting with business organisations today because time is running out to save our local businesses and we need to keep the pressure on.

It's clear that there is a way out of this crisis, the question is whether the Government are going to take it."

**Jim
McMahon, Shadow Minister for Local Government, said:**

"Our town centres and high streets are already struggling – and this latest hike in rates threatens to send many businesses under. Small businesses in particular need far more support than the Government is currently offering."

"This business rate revaluation has exposed the inherent flaws in this antiquated and unfair system. That's why we are calling for a full review of business rates. The Government must move towards a system which works for businesses, and their local communities."

**Mike
Cherry, National Chairman at the Federation of Small Businesses, said:**

"Business rates are an

outdated tax. FSB is keen for all political parties to help those small firms hardest hit by the current revaluation, and to start to focus on fundamental longer-term reform of business rates to make sure it's fair for small firms. It is incredibly important to support small businesses and the self-employed so they don't face shock tax rises, so we are delighted to take part in the roundtable."

Andrew

Silvester, Head of Campaigns & Deputy Director of Policy at the Institute of Directors said:

"It's hugely important that politicians on all sides look for constructive ways to reform business rates. This is a 20th century system and in a 21st century economy it looks painfully out of date."

Christopher

Richards, Senior Business Environment Policy Adviser at the Engineering Employers Federation, said:

"Establishing the principle that plant and machinery has no place in the business rates system is an important first step for all political actors to take, this is the top priority action for industry. The inclusion of plant and machinery in business rates bills represents a tax on productive investment and undermines the international competitiveness of UK manufacturing. Excluding future investments from being taxed is therefore a significant step in the right direction, is consistent with the government's industrial strategy aims and if enacted would give some confidence to manufacturers about the likely post-Brexit investment environment in the UK."

[Wing-Loong II UAS conducts maiden flight](#)

A Wing-Loong II, the new reconnaissance and strike multi-role endurance Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS), is on static display at the 2016 China Int'l Airshow in Zhuhai on Nov. 2, 2016. [File photo by Chen Boyuan / China.org.cn]

China's home-developed Wing-Loong II, the new reconnaissance and strike multi-role endurance Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS), successfully completed its maiden flight Monday.

With a more than 20 meter wingspan, the yellow Wing-Loong II No.01 made its

appearance on the runway of a highland airfield in western China at noon Monday, before conducting a 31-minute flight.

“Its flight marks China’s new generation reconnaissance and strike UAS. Following the United States, China becomes another country capable of developing such new generation large reconnaissance and strike UAS,” said Li Yidong, chief designer of the Wing-Loong UAS series.

The Wing-Loong UAS series were developed by Chengdu Aircraft Design and Research Institute (CADI) of the state-owned Aviation Industry Corporation of China.

Li said it showed that China had the capability to deliver new generation reconnaissance and strike UAS products to foreign military customers.

In fact, the Wing-Loong II has already won the biggest overseas purchase order in the history of Chinese UAS foreign military sales, even before its maiden flight.

The Wing-Loong II is a medium-altitude, long-endurance, multi-role UAS integrated with both reconnaissance and strike capabilities.

It is composed of the Wing-Loong II unmanned aircraft, GCS, mission payload and a ground support system.

Its unmanned aircraft is 11 meters in length, 4.1 meters in height, and 20.5 meters in wingspan. The maximum flying altitude of the aircraft is 9km, with a flying speed reaching up to 340km per hour.

It has a maximum take-off weight of 4.2 tonnes, with an external carriage weight of 480kg, and can fly for 20 hours in a persistent mission cruise.

Li said that the Wing-Loong II could perform reconnaissance, surveillance and ground strike missions.

“It can rapidly identify then strike against time-critical and fleeting targets. The capability is not possessed by previous unmanned aircraft, even manned aircraft,” Li said. “Taking a look at the UAS in same class around the world, the Wing-Loong II is equivalent to the U.S. MQ-9 Reaper, and ranks in the first level on the UAS list.”

With a system extension, it can also perform intelligence collection, electronic warfare, search and rescue missions, and has several uses, including military, anti-terrorism, peace keeping, border patrol operations and civilian use.

[News story: Technology Products 2 flash sale](#)

CCS have been working with a number of suppliers on our Technology Products 2 agreement (RM3733) to offer you huge savings on a range of products including desktops and laptops.

The sale begins on 1 March and runs throughout the month, or until stock is sold out. Stock availability is limited and will be sold on a first come, first served basis.

These short-term deals with manufacturers, including HPE, HPI, Dell and Lenovo, Samsung, Apple, XMA and Toshiba could help you save up to 35% for your organisation – whether you are a school, college, local council, NHS trust, charity, police force or government department.

To view the deals, simply log in to the Purchasing Platform (TP2) and some of the Flash sale products will appear on the landing page. Clicking through will take you to the full listing.

These Flash Sale deals are only available through Technology Products 2 (RM3733 Lot 6) via the catalogue content on the Purchasing Platform.

If you do not have a log on, you can find out more about the Purchasing Platform and how to register here :-

<https://purchasingplatform.crowncommercial.gov.uk>

[Press release: Charity Commission to hold public meeting in York](#)

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, will hold its next public meeting on 30 March 2017 at York CVS.

William Shawcross, Chairman of the Commission, will open and chair the meeting, followed by a range of presentations from senior staff including the Chief Operating Officer, David Holdsworth. The keynote speech will be delivered by Julia Unwin CBE, Chair of the Independent Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society and former Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF).

The meeting will focus on the work the Commission does to support charities, including how to engage with us digitally, as well as updates on our key guidance for trustees and what lessons there are from our casework. Attendees

will hear an update on the Commission's activities and have the opportunity to ask questions before the meeting concludes.

The event is free to attend and is aimed at providing charity trustees, employees and advisers with best practice guidance and encouraging good governance.

The meeting will take place from 12 noon to 4pm at York CVS, 15 Priory Street, York, YO1 6ET.

To confirm your attendance, please register to attend through [Eventbrite](#). Places are limited and will be allocated on a first-come, first-serve basis. Please note that only 2 attendees per organisation will be permitted to attend. Members of the press are also welcome to attend the event and are asked to register their interest with the press office directly at pressenquiries@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk.

Papers for public meeting 30 March 2017

Ends

PR 11/17

Notes to editors

1. [The Charity Commission](#) is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).