

News story: PM call with Prime Minister Turnbull of Australia: 23 February 2017

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Part of:

Theresa May spoke to Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull about stability in the Middle East, Brexit and a free trade agreement.

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister spoke to Prime Minister Turnbull of Australia this morning.

They discussed our co-operation in the campaign to defeat Daesh, and agreed on the importance of creating the conditions for long-term stability in Iraq. Prime Minister May was clear we need to see a political transition in Syria, away from President Assad.

They agreed on the need to tackle Iran's destabilising influence in the Middle East, and the importance of the nuclear deal and ensuring it is rigorously policed and enforced.

On Brexit, Prime Minister Turnbull reiterated Australia's commitment to maintaining a close partnership with the UK as we leave the EU. Both Prime Ministers said they looked forward to holding preliminary conversations on a comprehensive bilateral free trade agreement in due course.

They ended the call by looking forward to seeing each other at the [G20 meeting in Hamburg](#) in July.

China to step up property tax

legislation: official

China will move more swiftly in legislating a long-discussed property tax law, an official said on Thursday.

“It is a major task in China’s tax reform determined by policymakers, and the lawmaking process will be accelerated,” Lu Kehua, vice minister of housing and urban-rural development, said when answering questions on progress on the tax law during a press conference.

Related government agencies and legislators are carrying out work according to the plan, Lu added.

China has pushed forward the work for years, but progress has remained slow. A trial property tax has been introduced in Chongqing and Shanghai.

The law will fill the gap in taxing home ownership, as China’s current housing tax mechanism mainly taxes development and property sales.

Press release: Rare Georgian barometer at risk of leaving the UK

A rare Georgian barometer is at risk of being exported from the UK unless a buyer can be found to match the asking price of £160,000.

Culture Minister Matt Hancock has placed a temporary export bar on the George III mahogany wheel barometer to provide an opportunity to keep it in the country.

The piece is one of a small number of its design known to have been made by the renowned Whitehurst family of clockmakers, from Derby. It is one of only nine of this type known to exist, none of which are known to be in a UK public collection.

During the reign of King George III natural philosophy had become increasingly popular, with scientific instruments finding their way into the homes of the elite classes. The ornate decoration of this instrument indicates that it was intended for this purpose.

The possible association of the barometer with John Whitehurst makes this item of particular interest. As a clockmaker, instrument maker and natural philosopher he was a member of the Lunar Society, became Stamper of Money Weights at the Mint, was painted by Joseph Wright and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Minister of State for Digital and Culture Matt Hancock said:

This beautiful barometer is more than just an instrument – it also gives us a glimpse into the 18th century home and the increased interest in natural philosophy at the time.

As a rare and important item associated with a significant regional workshop, this fine piece offers an intriguing possibility for further study. I very much hope that we can keep it in the UK for this purpose.

The decision to defer the export licence follows a recommendation by the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest (RCEWA), administered by [The Arts Council](#).

RCEWA member Christopher Rowell said:

The scientifically sophisticated design of this rare Whitehurst barometer is matched by the high quality of the carved mahogany case.

No other Whitehurst barometer of this model is in a British public collection and its retention in this country is therefore highly desirable.

The RCEWA made its recommendation on the grounds of the barometer's outstanding significance to the study of the Whitehurst family's work.

The decision on the export licence application for the barometer will be deferred until 22 April 2017. This may be extended until 22 July 2017 if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase it is made at the recommended price of £160,000 (plus VAT of £2,000).

Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the barometer should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.

Images of the barometer can be downloaded via our [Flickr page](#)

For media information contact:

Yasmin Kaye Communications Officer Department for Culture Media and Sport
Tel: 0207 211 6489 Email: yasmin.kaye@culture.gov.uk

Notes to editors

1.Details of the barometer are as follows: Wheel barometer. Dial, silvered, signed 'Whitehurst Derby' with 3-inch scale for 29-31 inches of mercury subdivided into hundredths and inscribed for changeable, rain, fair. Case:

mahogany, carved with leaves, column (housing the tube) with acanthus leaves at base, and urn finial. Made by Whitehurst of Derby, c. 1770-1780 H 43", W 14", D 2.25"

2.The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.

3.The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections.
www.artscouncil.org.uk.

News story: Mrs Justice Whipple appointed a Commissioner of the Judicial Appointments Commission

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The Lord Chancellor has appointed Mrs Justice Whipple as a Commissioner of JAC, following selection by the Judges' Council.

The appointment is for an initial term of 3 years from 22 December 2016.

Mrs Justice Whipple has been a judge of the High Court, Queen's Bench Division, since 2015. She sat as a Recorder from 2009 and as a deputy High Court judge from 2013.

Young people from disadvantaged

backgrounds continue to perform worse than their peers in school – Cat Smith

Cat

Smith MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for Voter Engagement and Youth Affairs, commenting on the ONS Young NEET figures out today, said:

“While

it is welcome that the latest figures show a decline in the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), this Tory Government continues to fail young people.

“There

are still 826,000 young people who are NEETs. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds continue to perform worse than their peers in school.

“Those

who manage to find work are excluded from the national living wage and many are subjected to exploitative zero-hours contracts.

“Only

Labour will prioritise young people's needs and address these failings.”