

# **Press release: Defined benefit green paper to look at the security and sustainability of the sector**

Member protection, funding and investment, scheme affordability and consolidation will be reviewed as part of the consultation.

The government will also consider strengthened powers for [The Pensions Regulator](#).

The green paper will be a wide ranging call for evidence from employers, the pensions industry and consumers.

## **Background**

Defined benefit schemes, many of which are also known as ‘final salary pensions’, are an important pillar of the UK economy and our pensions system. Currently, around 11 million members in the UK will rely on a defined benefit scheme for all or part of their retirement income and defined benefit pensions hold around £1.5 trillion of assets.

Increased life expectancy, changes to working patterns and the economy mean that defined benefit schemes are operating in very different circumstances from when they first became popular.

## **The purpose of the green paper**

The government is committed to a system that works for employers, schemes and the 11 million people who are in a defined benefit scheme.

The green paper will consider the powers of [The Pensions Regulator](#) and encourage a debate about striking the right balance between the needs and aspirations of sponsoring employers, members, the [Pension Protection Fund](#), and the wider economy to ensure that no one group is unfairly disadvantaged.

Minister for Pensions, Richard Harrington, said:

People need to have confidence in their pension and it is vital that they feel that they are secure. With recent high profile cases highlighting the risks inherent in defined benefit pensions, we want to ensure that these important pension schemes remain sustainable for the future and that the right protections are in place for members.

Over the coming months we'll be working closely with the pensions industry, employers and scheme members to see what more can be done to increase confidence in defined benefit pensions.

While there is no evidence of a systematic issue, the government recognises that recent high profile cases have raised concerns regarding pensions and is looking to improve confidence in the sector and hear from a wide range of experts, employers and consumers about what action or support could be put in place.

The green paper looks at a range of issues that have been raised by various stakeholders. In particular it focuses on 4 key areas so that we can start to build consensus on whether we may want to reform the current system. They are:

- funding and investment
- scheme affordability
- member protection
- consolidation.

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## [News story: Commercialisation of quantum technologies: apply for funding](#)

From:

First published:

20 February 2017

Businesses can win a share of £14 million to either develop quantum technology prototypes or establish technical or market feasibility.

Innovate UK and the [Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council](#) (EPSRC) are inviting business to apply for a share of up to £14 million to develop quantum technologies.

Quantum technologies have the potential to significantly improve imaging and

computing. We predict they will have a major impact on the finance, defence, aerospace, energy and telecommunications sectors.

The competition aims to encourage collaborative research and development (CR&D) projects and feasibility studies that will either:

- develop prototype devices and demonstrators of quantum technologies or their component technologies
- improve the understanding of the technical, business or market challenges of taking a new device or service to market

There are 2 streams of the competition to support technologies at different stages of development.

### **Feasibility studies**

This competition strand is seeking collaborative feasibility studies that will improve understanding of the technical or market feasibility of a product or service. Projects can be technical or non-technical projects and focus on understanding the business or market opportunity and challenges. They should last between 6 and 12 months with costs from £50,000 to £500,000.

### **Collaborative R&D**

Projects in the collaborative research and development strand should be challenge-led. We are looking to fund projects that produce prototype devices and demonstrators with a clear commercial application or market need. They should last between 12 and 18 months with costs from £500,000 to £2 million.

- this competition is open and the deadline for registration is midday on Wednesday 29 March 2017
- proposals must be collaborative and a UK-based business must lead the project
- there will be briefing events for potential applicants in Edinburgh (21 February) and Birmingham (2 March)

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## **Protecting Scotland's environment**

20 Feb 2017



Our natural resources cannot be consumed at the current “unsustainable” rate, the Scottish Conservatives will declare this week, in a major new policy paper marking Scottish Environment Week.

In the document, to be published on Wednesday, the party will spell out a series of new initiatives designed to protect Scotland's environment and

tackle climate change.

The document comes with the Scottish Conservatives preparing for its spring conference on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, where it will set out its plan to offer a fresh alternative to the SNP as Scotland's main opposition party.

In the foreword, published today, the party's environment spokesman Maurice Golden makes it clear that "we can no longer consume our natural resources at the current unsustainable rate, and we can no longer think of economic development as a competing force against environmental protection".

Scottish Environment week is organised by Scottish Environment Link, and will feature a series of events designed to highlight efforts to tackle climate change. Among policies outlined in the new paper, the party will say:

- 10% of all the Scottish Government's capital budget should be spent on energy efficiency measures – with the aim of ensuring all homes are energy efficiency by 2030.
- A new target should be set to ensure 75% of all waste is recycled by 2035 through the creation of an easy-to-use collection system.
- Ministers should create 15,000 hectares of new quality woodland per year – up from 7,600 a year in 2015.

**Writing in the foreword to the document, Mr Golden will say:**

"The Scottish Conservative approach to the Environment and Climate Change is founded on three key tenets.

"The first is a belief that Climate Change is one of the greatest challenges we face, and we must show leadership on the world stage to reduce global emissions.

"The second is that, in the long term, resource prices will increase, and moreover, access to these resources will become less reliable. By decreasing our reliance on products which are manufactured abroad we can reduce global emissions but also grow the economy and create jobs here in Scotland.

"The third tenet is that we need to look holistically at our management of the environment. That means making the business case, but also recognising that for certain projects the business case will not be viable if assessed via conventional accounting.

"We will prioritise achieving behaviour change, technological advancement, big data and innovation in order to tackle climate change, boost biodiversity, grow the economy, create more, better jobs and ensure new ideas are delivered for the benefit of Scotland."

The full paper will be launched in Edinburgh on Wednesday by party leader Ruth Davidson and Mr Golden.

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More details on Scottish Environment week here:

## **£95 million investment to train healthcare professionals in Wales**

This significant investment will support nurses, physiotherapists, radiographers and a range of health science training opportunities.

It will enable more than 3000 new students to join those already studying healthcare education programmes across Wales.

The funding builds on Welsh Government funding already in place for nursing, providing more than a 13% increase in nursing training places, on top of the 10% increase in 2016/17 and 22% increase in 2015/16. Midwifery training places will increase by 40%.

The support package will also provide an additional £500,000 to support community healthcare such as advanced practice, education and extended skills training to support primary care clusters.

There will also be a significant increase in practice nurse and district nurse education as well as audiology training places within primary and community settings. This will provide vital funding for community services and will ensure many more patients can be cared for closer to home, rather than in hospital.

Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething said:

“We rely on the skills, knowledge and experience of those providing the care in the NHS on a daily basis.

“This includes nurses and paramedics as well as those behind the scenes, who provide vital support services such as laboratory tests to enable diagnoses to be made and “treatment to be provided.

“Education and training is fundamental to ensuring the sustainability of our workforce.

“This £95m investment will ensure that our healthcare professionals are able to provide high quality care now and in the future and that patients’ will be able to receive care closer to home.”

The funding package also includes an additional cohort of physician associate training places available from September 2017 with 12 of these places hosted by Bangor University and 20 hosted by Swansea University.

The funding will also support the integration of hospital and community pharmacy training and education into one programme.

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## Green Party: Government must stop pushing costs of social care onto councils and residents



# Green Party

20 February 2017

The Green Party has called on the Government to up spending on councils after it was revealed local services will still face deep cuts despite nearly every local authority in England planning to raise council taxes [1].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“The Government’s failure to invest in councils has put many in a desperate situation, with no choice but to cut valuable community resources like libraries and youth centres. The Government appears intent on starving local services and bringing almost every local authority close to financial breaking point.

“Proper social care for the elderly should be a red line. It should be non-negotiable and centrally funded. Government needs to take responsibility and invest in councils, rather than pushing costs onto residents and creating a postcode lottery of care. Instead of bringing the social care system to its knees, the Government should be facing up to the simple fact that if we want good social care we need to pay for it. The Green Party is the only party proposing that we make the right choice to invest in a secure future for our older people with free social care for the over 65s. ”

### Notes:

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38982643>

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