

Digital Technology ensures level playing field providing equal opportunities for all- Col. Rathore

Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore has said that Digital Technology

Proposed changes to supply teaching in Wales published

The Welsh Government established the Ministerial Supply Model Taskforce in June 2016 to consider issues around supply teachers. They considered the complexities and variations in how supply teachers are employed.

Their report offers a range of recommendations, including considering cost efficiencies, highlighting safeguarding responsibilities, accurate data collection, proposals for pay and conditions, and supporting newly qualified teachers and professional learning opportunities.

Recommendations include:

- Improving the data collected on supply teachers so it is more accurate.
- Undertake a full cost analysis to measure the true cost of supply teaching.
- Consider the terms and conditions of supply teachers as part of broader proposals to devolve teachers' pay and conditions to Wales.
- Raise awareness with employers to the responsibilities placed upon them in relation to safeguarding and update workforce guidance.
- Consider regulating the quality of commercial supply agencies by introducing a set of accredited minimum quality standards that all commercial agencies providing teachers to maintained schools should meet.

The Welsh Government has accepted the majority of the report's recommendations. However, further detailed policy and legal work will be carried out to establish whether all of the recommendations can be delivered, including the recommendations around quality standards and regional collaborative working.

Education Secretary Kirsty Williams said:

“Supply teachers are an important part of the teacher workforce and I want to make sure they have the opportunity for professional development and are able to support our wider education reforms.

“As the report concludes, there is clear room for improvement in the way we currently employ, manage and support the delivery of supply teachers. While I accept the report’s recommendations at this time, some of them raise complex legal issues which we will need to look into further. We will now begin this process, working closely with councils, schools, the teaching workforce, unions and others.

“Any changes must fit with our national mission to raise standards and extend opportunities for all our young people.”

Statement to Parliament: Exiting the European Union: Ministerial statement 2 February 2017

With permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the government’s plans for exiting the European Union.

Today we are publishing a government White Paper on the UK’s exit from, and new partnership with, the European Union.

The government has made clear that it will honour the choice made by the people of the UK on 23 June 2016 to leave the European Union.

This House is currently considering a straightforward Bill that will give the Prime Minister the authority to trigger Article 50 of the Treaty of the European Union and begin the negotiation over our exit.

That is not a Bill about whether or not we leave the EU, or even how we do so, but about implementing a decision already taken by the people of the UK in last year’s referendum.

But we have always said we would detail our strategic aims for the negotiation, and seek to build a national consensus wherever possible.

This White Paper sets out those aims and the thinking behind them.

It confirms the Prime Minister’s vision of an independent, truly global UK and an ambitious future relationship with the EU.

This is based on the 12 principles that will guide the government in

fulfilling the democratic will of the people of the UK. These are:

- providing certainty and clarity where we can as we approach the negotiations
- taking control of our own laws and statute book
- strengthening the Union by securing a deal that works for the whole of the UK
- maintaining the common travel area and protecting our strong historic ties with Ireland
- controlling immigration from the European Union
- securing the rights for European Union citizens already living in the UK and the rights of UK nationals living in the European Union
- protecting and enhancing existing workers' rights
- ensuring free trade with European markets, forging a new strategic partnership with the EU including a bold and ambitious free trade agreement and mutually beneficial new customs agreement
- forging ambitious free trade agreements with other countries across the world
- ensuring the United Kingdom remains the best place for science and innovation
- co-operating in the fight against crime and terrorism
- and, finally, delivering a smooth, orderly exit from the European Union

These 12 objectives amount to one goal: a new, positive and constructive partnership between Britain and the European Union, that works in our mutual interest.

All of them are key. But let me highlight some of the specific issues in the White Paper.

It reiterates our firm view that it is in the UK's interest for the European Union to succeed politically and economically. I can't say too firmly, we want the EU to succeed politically and economically.

And so we approach the negotiation to come in a spirit of goodwill and working to an outcome in our mutual benefit.

We recognise the EU's principle of the 4 freedoms, and so the UK will leave the single market.

Instead we seek a new strategic partnership. A bold and ambitious free trade and customs agreement that should ensure the most free and frictionless trade in goods and services that is possible.

That will be to our mutual benefit. As the White Paper notes, we export £230 billion worth of goods and services to the EU, while importing £290 billion worth of goods and services from the EU every year.

It also sets out how after we leave the European Union, the UK will look to significantly increase its trade with the fastest growing export markets in the world.

While we cannot sign new trade deals while still members, we can and are preparing the ground for them. This means updating the terms of our membership of the World Trade Organisation, of which the UK was a founding member – as GAC in the first instance.

Modern free trade agreements require mechanisms to resolve disputes and to provide certainty for businesses on both sides. So the White Paper examines precedents in this area, and makes clear that we will negotiate an arrangement that respects UK sovereignty.

In terms of clarity and certainty, we recognise the need to provide it wherever we can during a period when some uncertainty is inevitable.

So we will bring forward another White Paper, on the Great Repeal Bill, which will lay out our approach in detail.

This legislation will mean the repeal of the European Communities Act and end the authority of EU law and convert it into domestic law at the point of exit.

That means that the position we start from, a common regulatory framework with the EU Single Market, is unprecedented.

The negotiation will not be about bringing together 2 divergent systems. It is about finding the best way for the benefits of the common systems and frameworks that currently enable the UK and EU businesses to trade with and operate in each other's markets to continue when we leave the EU.

The White Paper also sets out that we will take control of our own laws, so that they are made in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, and ensure that we can control the number of people coming to the UK from the European Union.

And the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the European Union in the UK will come to an end.

It will be for Parliament and the devolved legislatures to determine significant changes to reflect our new position.

I have said at this dispatch box before that there will be any number of votes on substantive policy choices. To that end, the White Paper makes clear that we expect to bring forward separate legislation in areas such as customs and immigration.

Delivering a smooth, mutually beneficial exit, avoiding a disruptive cliff-edge, will be the key.

A never-ending transitional status is emphatically not what we seek. But a phased process of implementation of new arrangements – whether immigration controls, customs systems, the way we cooperate on criminal and civil justice matters, or future regulatory and legal frameworks for business – will be necessary for both sides.

As the White Paper says, the time needed to phase in new arrangements in different areas may vary.

As one of the most important actors in global affairs, we will continue to work with the EU to preserve UK and European security, fight crime and terrorism and uphold justice. We must work more closely, not less, in these areas.

We will continue to seek to build a national consensus around our negotiating position.

So we are talking all the time to business, civil society, the public sector, representatives of the regions.

We have engaged the devolved administrations in this process and, while no part of the UK can have a veto, are determined to deliver an outcome that works for the whole of our country.

We continue to analyse the impact of our exit across the breadth of the UK economy, covering more than 50 sectors, 58 at last count, to shape our negotiating position.

To conclude, the referendum result was not a vote to turn our back on Europe. It was a vote of confidence in the UK's ability to succeed in the world and an expression of optimism that our best days are still to come.

Whatever the outcome of our negotiations, we seek a more open, outward-looking, confident and fairer UK that works for everyone.

The White Paper is available on the government website. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

[Read the White Paper.](#)

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2 Feb 2017



The SNP's business rates hike has been slammed by its own party, after a nationalist north east branch was priced out of a hotel it's been using since the 1970s.

The Banff Springs Hotel in Aberdeenshire has been hit with a £50,000 rates rise thanks to Scottish Government changes.

As a result, it's been forced to pass on that additional cost to customers, or face going out of business.

And now it's emerged the Banff and Macduff branch of the SNP is one of those customers refusing to pay the increased rate.

It told the hotel: "The increase in hire fee is excessive to say the least. Should this apply ... I can confirm there will be no further booking and our business will be taken elsewhere."

The embarrassing revelation was raised at First Minister's Questions by Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson, as she attacked the SNP on its increasing of business taxes.

That move, along with income tax hits to be announced in the budget later, makes Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK.

However, instead of addressing the concerns shared by her north east branch, she merely said the hotel would have an opportunity appeal the rise.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"Even the SNP's own branches are opposing the hike in business rates, so perhaps it's time for Nicola Sturgeon to listen.

"These unfair increases, which see businesses like the Banff Springs Hotel paying more than double their current rates, could force closures and job losses.

"The SNP won't listen to reason or hard evidence, so perhaps it will take notice now it's been embarrassed in the Scottish Parliament.

"If the First Minister's own party doesn't support this policy, surely even she recognises it's time to do something about it."

To see the letter of complaint by the SNP Banff branch, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Hotel-complaint.jpg>

The SNP organisation has been using the hotel since 1976:

<https://www.facebook.com/BanffandMacduff/posts/1104255902998301>

Festival of India being organised in Senegal from 26 January – 28 February, 201

A Festival of India is being organized in Senegal from 26 January – 28 February, 2017. The Festival will showcase diverse Indian culture,