

NHS pay awards show commitment to living wage

More than 7,000 of the lowest paid employees will see an uplift to £8.45 an hour, in line with the Living Wage Foundation's Living Wage.

In addition to the Living Wage uprating, other salary increases from 1 April for 2017-18 are:

- A 1% consolidated pay increase for all Agenda for Change staff in NHS Wales;
- A 1% increase for salaried doctors and dentists;
- A 1% increase will be applied to the value of Clinical Excellence Awards;
- A 1% increase will be applied to the value of Commitment Awards;
- A 1% increase to the value of the GP trainers' grant;
- A 1% increase for independent contractor General Medical Practitioners and General Dental Practitioners;
- A 1% salary increase for NHS Senior Executives, their first pay award since 2009.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

"I remain committed to tackling the issue of low pay in Wales and will ensure the lowest earners in NHS Wales are paid a fair salary, as recommended by the Living Wage Foundation.

"I am therefore implementing the uplift to the Living Wage – to £8.45 an hour – for all directly employed NHS staff from 1 April 2017.

"I am pleased that I am able to award pay increases in line with the independent pay review bodies' pay recommendations and to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to staff working in the NHS in Wales. I am also committed to working in Social Partnership with employers and those representing NHS staff to consider the way forward on the other issues the pay review bodies raised."

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething has accepted recommendations on pay by both the NHS Pay Review Body and the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration.

Quarter of a billion pound boost for Wales' rural communities

Lesley Griffiths today confirmed she is fully committing the remaining tranche of funding under the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014 – 2020.

The funding, a combination of Welsh Government and EU money, is an investment in key areas that will help rural communities to be more resilient during the post-EU transition period. It will provide Wales' farmers, food producers, landowners and others with a certain degree of assurance that they can start to make future plans and shape their business operations accordingly.

Clarity on future funding arrangements was a key issue raised during a number of Brexit Round Table meetings and workshops, involving representatives from across the Environment and Rural Affairs portfolio, set up by the Cabinet Secretary immediately after the outcome of the EU referendum.

Today's announcement means a wide range of important schemes can now open including Farm Business Grant, Glastir Advanced, Food Business Investment Scheme, Co-operation and Supply Chain Development, Glastir Woodland Creation and Rural Community Development Fund.

The Cabinet Secretary made the decision to fully commit the remaining EU element of the funding, totalling £126.3m, after the UK Government guaranteed funding for all projects signed before the UK leaves the EU. Previously, the Chancellor only guaranteed to finance projects signed before the 2016 Autumn Statement. The Welsh Government will also provide £96.4m.

The Cabinet Secretary's Round Table group, comprising representatives from across the portfolio, reconvened yesterday. In addition, a series of cross-sector stakeholder workshops, involving more than one hundred people have taken place at different locations across Wales between August and October 2016.

The Round Table meetings and workshops have enabled representatives from across the Environment and Rural Affairs portfolio to look at the implications of Brexit in a joined-up way, in particular the key risks, opportunities, and possible ways forward.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“Tomorrow promises to be a significant day for Wales and the UK, when the prospect of a future outside the EU starts to become very much a reality. It also signals the official start of a period of uncertainty for all involved in Wales' rural communities. We still don't know what the future landscape will look like but we are pressing the UK Government to honour the commitment made during the referendum campaign that we will not lose out on money we would

otherwise have received from the EU.

“I am pleased to confirm, therefore, we are committing the entirety of the remaining funding under the RDP, worth nearly a quarter of a billion pounds. I hope this provides reassurance to Wales’ rural communities who have benefited greatly from the wide range of programmes under the RDP.

“Following the result of the EU referendum, I was keen to bring together representatives from across my portfolio to discuss in detail the risks and opportunities that Brexit presents. The contribution by all involved has been very positive and there is a real commitment from them to work together.

“This engagement underlines the strength of the links that exist in Wales between areas like agriculture, communities and the wider environment. The discussions that have taken place have been invaluable in identifying how we should plan for a future outside the EU.”

Full details of upcoming scheme windows under the [RDP](#) will be available on the Welsh Government website in due course.

[Press release: Secretary of State for NI statement](#)

Speaking after this afternoon’s deadline for the formation of a new Northern Ireland Executive, Mr Brokenshire said:

It is extremely disappointing that an Executive has not been formed in Northern Ireland today.

There will be widespread dismay across the community.

Over the past three weeks we have been engaged in intensive talks and progress has been made on a number of issues.

These include work to set a budget, a Programme for Government and ways of improving governance, transparency and accountability for

politics here in Northern Ireland.

We have made further moves forward on agreeing a way to implement the Stormont House legacy bodies to help provide better outcomes for victims and survivors of the troubles.

In addition there was progress made around how Northern Ireland's interests would be represented in our negotiations to leave the EU as Article 50 is triggered on Wednesday.

Yet it is also clear that there remain significant gaps between the parties, particularly over issues surrounding culture and identity.

Throughout this process the UK Government has been active in making positive proposals to try and bridge these gaps and help the parties to move things forward.

Despite these efforts, agreement at this stage has not proved possible.

This will have impacts.

We are rapidly approaching the point at which Northern Ireland will not have an agreed budget.

This is not sustainable and will have consequences for public services.

From Wednesday financial resources to allow Northern Ireland's Departments to deliver key public services will fall under the control of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

I believe that there remains an overwhelming desire among the political parties and the public here for strong and stable devolved government.

I have spoken to the leaders of each of the main Parties this afternoon and there is no appetite for any alternative.

I will be making a Statement in Parliament tomorrow on next steps.

We now have a short window of opportunity to resolve outstanding issues and for an Executive to be formed.

Everyone owes it to the people of Northern Ireland to grasp that and provide the political leadership and the stability they want.

[News story: New app to report Asian hornet sightings](#)

The nation's smartphones are the latest weapon in the fight to prevent the spread of the Asian hornet, thanks to a new app which has been launched today.

People will be able to use the free app – called Asian Hornet Watch – to quickly and easily report possible sightings of the invasive species and send pictures of suspect insects to experts at the National Bee Unit.

While Asian hornets pose no greater risk to human health than a bee, they are a threat to our native honey bees, which is why it is important to quickly contain them.

By using the eyes and ears of smartphone users, we can more quickly identify any Asian hornet nests in the UK and eradicate them before they have the opportunity to spread.

Biosecurity Minister Lord Gardiner said:

This innovative new app is designed to be easy to use and allows people to report quickly any possible sightings of Asian hornets, which will help us to halt their spread.

This invasive species poses a threat to our native honey bees and we must do all we can to encourage vigilance – this new technology will advance this.

The interactive app, developed by the Great Britain Non-native Species Secretariat and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, will also make it easier for people to judge whether an insect may actually be an Asian hornet; with pictures available of other insects that it could be confused with and helpful information about their size, appearance and the times of year they are most likely to be spotted.

If there is a sighting of the Asian hornet, the government's well established protocol for eradicating the species will kick quickly into action: This was the case in Gloucestershire last Autumn, when bee inspectors rapidly tracked down and [destroyed an Asian hornet nest](#), containing any further outbreak.

There are fears the pest could reappear this spring, so members of the public are being urged to report any sightings quickly to again allow inspectors to intervene. Asian hornets can be distinguished from their native counterparts by their abdomens, which are entirely dark except for a single band of yellow – native hornets' abdomens are predominantly yellow.

Martin Smith, Public Affairs Manager at the British Beekeepers' Association, said:

This new app launched today by Defra is a welcome addition to current reporting methods that have enabled beekeepers and members of the public to report possible sightings. The key to containment is catching outbreaks as early as possible and allowing fast tracking of the insects back to their nest. We will certainly be encouraging all our 25,000 beekeepers to install the app and use it if they see what might be an Asian hornet near their hives.

Asian hornets arrived in France in 2004 and have since spread across large areas of Western Europe. It was discovered for the first time in the British Isles in Jersey and Alderney last summer.

The native European hornet is a valued and important part of our wildlife, and queens and nests of this species should not be destroyed.

Notes to editors

1. The 'Asian Hornet Watch' app is available to download from the [Apple](#) and [Android](#) app stores.
2. The Great Britain Non-native Species Secretariat is a joint venture between Defra, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government to tackle the threat of invasive species. More information can be found on their website <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/home/index.cfm>
3. Members of the public can also report sightings by email to alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk with a photo or on the Non-native Species

Secretariat [website](#).

4. For details on the appearance of an Asian hornet please can be found on [Bee Base guide](#) or the [non-native species identification guide](#).

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