News story: UK government’s sale of Green Investment Bank completed

The Climate Change and Industry Minister, Claire Perry, confirmed today (18 August 2017) that the sale of the Green Investment Bank (GIB) to Macquarie Group Limited has now been completed.

The £2.3 billion deal ensures that all the taxpayer funding invested in GIB since its creation, including set-up costs, has been returned with a gain of approximately £186 million.

As well as fully meeting the government’s objectives, the deal secures the future of the GIB with an ambitious new owner committed to growing the business. The Edinburgh office will be home to a new revenue-generating business as well as providing services to the green energy portfolios of both Macquarie and GIB in the UK.

The government decided that moving it into the private sector now would free it from the constraints of public sector ownership allowing it to increase investment in our green infrastructure as we transition to a green economy. GIB’s independent Board supported the government’s decision to sell the business to Macquarie.

In order to build on the company’s success within the private sector, Macquarie and GIB have announced today that the company will now be known as the Green Investment Group (GIG) so that it will be able to make overseas investments.

Climate Change and Industry Minister Claire Perry said:

> We led the world in setting up the Green Investment Bank and it is now being copied by others. Now that it’s in the private sector, it will be able to operate on an international level to tackle the global challenge of climate change. It is also perfectly placed to help us finance green initiatives for our Clean Growth Plan and realise the commitments set out in the Paris Agreement.

The green ‘special share’ held by the Green Purposes Company Limited also comes into force now. Five independent trustees have the power to approve or reject any proposed changes to GIG’s green purposes in the future.

The government will continue to hold an interest in a portfolio of a small number of GIB’s existing green infrastructure investments. These assets will continue to be managed by GIB until they can be sold on in a way which returns best value for taxpayers’ money.

1. The sale of the Green Investment Group (formerly Green Investment Bank)

was announced in April 2017. It was secured through a competitive process and met the objectives outlined when it launched the sales process last year. As well as securing value for money for the taxpayer and freeing GIG from the constraints of public sector ownership, it will enable GIG to grow its support for green projects.

2. The sale proceeds of £1.75 billion, which has now been received, sees all taxpayer funding invested in GIG returned with a gain of around £186 million. This, together with over £500 million of current outstanding commitments which will now be met by Macquarie and its partners rather than taxpayers, means that the transaction value is around £2.3 billion.

3. The government has now repealed the relevant provisions of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013, removing statutory controls over GIG's green purposes to ensure that GIG can be re-classified to the private sector.

4. The government will provide a report to Parliament on the sale, as required under the Enterprise Act 2016 in the Autumn.

News story: CMA accepts Heineken/Punch pub sales

The CMA has accepted proposals by Heineken to resolve concerns over its proposed purchase of Punch Taverns.

In June, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) said that Heineken's proposed purchase of part of the Punch Taverns estate could reduce competition in 33 local areas across Great Britain. Before the merger was referred for a further in-depth investigation, the companies were given the opportunity to offer proposals to address these concerns.

Heineken has offered to sell pubs in each of the affected areas to preserve competition and ensure customers in these locations do not lose out.

Before reaching a final decision, the CMA carefully assessed and consulted publicly on these proposed undertakings. The CMA is satisfied that its concerns have been addressed and has therefore decided that the merger will not be referred for an in-depth phase 2 investigation.

All information relating to this investigation can be found on the case page.

Press release: CMA protects London–Exeter passengers with fare cap

Earlier this year, the Department for Transport awarded the South Western rail franchise to FirstGroup and MTR. FirstGroup already operates Great Western Railway (GWR), which runs the only other train service between London and Exeter.

An initial merger investigation by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) raised concerns this could reduce competition on the London–Exeter route, leading to higher fares or worse service for passengers.

In July the CMA announced it would consider an offer (‘undertakings’) proposed by FirstGroup and MTR aimed at addressing these concerns.

The offer made by the 2 companies involves a price cap on unregulated fares between London and Exeter on both South Western and GWR services. Ticket prices on the route will be linked to those on a number of other comparable services to ensure they are kept in line with the market.

The companies have also offered to maintain the availability of cheaper advance fares on both services, again by linking them with similar routes.

The CMA consulted publicly on the proposals, which it has now accepted.

FirstGroup and MTR will be required to submit regular reports to the CMA to show they are complying with the agreement.

The acceptance of these proposals by the CMA means that the award of the franchise will go ahead without the deal being referred for a more in-depth ‘phase 2’ investigation.

All other information relating to this investigation can be found on the case page. The final undertakings will be published shortly.

Rachel Merelie, Executive Director of Markets and Mergers, said:

> We examined the proposals very thoroughly during the consultation period to ensure that they addressed all of our concerns. We believe that they will protect passengers from fares being pushed up due to lack of competition on this key route between London and Exeter.

Notes for editors

1. The CMA is the UK’s primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law.

2. Media enquiries to the CMA should be directed to rebecca.cassar@cma.gsi.gov.uk or 020 3738 6633

3. For CMA updates, follow us on Twitter @CMAgovuk, Facebook, Flickr and LinkedIn.

News story: £5 million investment for new obesity policy research unit

The Department of Health has announced £5 million of funding for a new obesity policy research unit at University College London.

One year on from the launch of the childhood obesity plan, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Obesity Policy Research Unit has been set up to provide resource for long term research into childhood obesity.

It will give independent advice to policy makers and analysts, and develop understanding on the causes of childhood obesity, looking at social inequalities, the early years of childhood, and marketing to children and families.

It will also help to evaluate action that has been taken so far, to make sure the plan works for those who need it most.

In addition, the government tasked Public Health England (PHE) to look at why children are eating too many calories.

Philip Dunne, Minister of State for Health, said:

> Too many of our children are growing up obese, which can lead to serious health complications. We all have a responsibility to help people live healthier lives, but with a third of children leaving primary school obese we must take a comprehensive approach and now focus on excess calories.
>
> This can only be done through strong guidance, grounded in evidence. That’s why we have funded a new £5 million dedicated obesity policy research unit to understand the deeper causes of

> obesity.

Professor Russell Viner, Policy Research Unit Director and Professor of Adolescent Health, at UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, said:

> Obesity is one of the greatest health concerns of our time and we welcome this considerable and very timely investment from the government.
>
> We are delighted that the UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health will host the new obesity policy research unit (OPRU). Preventing obesity in early life is key to turning the tide on this modern epidemic.

Obesity levels among children and young people present a significant, long-term challenge for the NHS: reducing calorie consumption is critical to reversing the worrying obesity trend, which shows:

- 1 in 3 children are either overweight or obese by the time they leave primary school
- children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be obese
- more children in the UK than ever before are being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, some as young as 7

Press release: Next stage of world-leading childhood obesity plan announced

As set out in the plan, PHE will now consider the evidence on children’s calorie consumption and set the ambition for the calorie reduction programme to remove excess calories from the foods children consume the most.

Ready meals, pizzas, burgers, savoury snacks and sandwiches are the kinds of foods likely to be included in the programme.

Over the past year, real progress has been made on reducing the level of sugar in many products.

The Soft Drinks Industry Levy has become law and will come into effect in April 2018 and PHE has formulated a comprehensive sugar reduction programme with the aim of a 20% reduction in sugar in key foods by 2020. Leading retailers and manufacturers have also announced they are, or already have, lowered the amount of sugar in their products as a result of these programmes.

Sugar reformulation was a vital first step under the childhood obesity programme, however overconsumption of calories will continue to have a detrimental effect on the health of our children without further action.

Adults currently consume on average between 200 to 300 calories too many each day and children are following suit, with food more readily available than ever before. Reducing calorie consumption from sources other than sugar is critical to reversing the worrying obesity trend, which shows:

- 1 in 3 children are either overweight or obese by the time they leave primary school
- more children in the UK than previously are being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, some as young as 7
- children from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be obese

Philip Dunne, Minister of State for Health said:

> Too many of our children are growing up obese, which can lead to serious health complications. We all have a responsibility to help people live healthier lives, but with a third of children leaving primary school obese we must take a comprehensive approach and now focus on excess calories.
>
> This can only be done through strong guidance, grounded in evidence – that’s why we have funded a new £5 million dedicated Obesity Research Policy Unit to understand the deeper causes of obesity.

Duncan Selbie, chief executive of PHE, said:

> A third of children leave primary school overweight or obese and an excess of calories – not just excess sugar consumption – is the root cause of this.
>
> We will work with the food companies and retailers to tackle this as the next critical step in combating our childhood obesity problem.

PHE will publish the evidence in early 2018. Following this it will then consult with the food industry, trade bodies and health non-governmental organisations to develop guidance and timelines for the calorie reduction programme.

The Department of Health has also funded a policy research unit – the £5 million National Institute for Health Obesity Research Policy Unit at University College London – which will look to develop a deeper understanding on the causes of childhood obesity, including marketing to children and families, social inequalities, and the early years of childhood.

Professor Russell Viner, Policy Research Unit Director and Professor of Adolescent Health, UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, said:

> Obesity is one of the greatest health concerns of our time and we welcome this considerable and very timely investment from the government. We are delighted that the UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health will host the new Obesity Policy Research Unit (OPRU). Preventing obesity in early life is key to turning the tide on this modern epidemic.

1. Since the childhood obesity plan was published, retailers and manufacturers like Nestle, General Mills, Lucozade Ribena Suntory, Tesco, Waitrose, Kellogg's, Sainsbury's, Marks and Spencer, Greggs, Starbucks and Breck's Food have announced they are, or already have, lowered the amount of sugar in their products.

2. The sugar reduction programme sees Public Health England working with the food and drink industry to remove 20% of the sugar children (up to 18 years of age) consume from the foods that contribute the most sugar to their diets by 2020. Guidelines that set out the approaches the food industry should take to achieve this target were published in March alongside baseline levels of sugar in products.

3. The Soft Drinks Industry Levy comes into effect in April 2018. Drinks with more than 8g of total sugar per 100ml will pay 24p per litre, with drinks between 5g and 8g sugar per 100ml paying 18p. Drink with less than 5g sugar per 100ml are exempt.

4. The free Change4Life Be Food Smart app helps families see the amount of sugar, salt and saturated fat in food and drinks. More information is on the Be Food Smart website.

5. It is estimated 40,000 deaths per year in England are attributable to being overweight or obese (over 10% of all deaths). An estimated 70,000 premature deaths in the UK could be avoided each year if UK diets matched nutritional guidelines.

For further information on the calorie reduction programme, contact:

For more information on the new Obesity Research Policy Unit, contact: