

News story: Ministry of Defence Police awarded a gold banding in the Business in the Community Diversity Benchmark

This is the UK's most comprehensive benchmark for workplace gender and race diversity where organisations are assessed on a range of key areas, including:

- career progression
- recruitment
- supplier diversity
- senior management and board representation of ethnic minorities and women

Business in the Community (BITC) said:

Congratulations to Ministry of Defence Police on being awarded gold for both gender and race diversity in the workplace in the Business in the Community Diversity Benchmark.

They have demonstrated a strong commitment to creating inclusive workplaces where employees are valued and rewarded for their contribution to the organisation, regardless of gender or race.

I hope other employers will learn from their example and use it to drive real change within their own organisations.

Business in the Community Diversity Benchmark: Gender gold award. All rights reserved

The gold banding marks a significant leap in the force's progress as they were previously awarded a Bronze banding for their 2016 submission.

The Force's Gender Champion, Deputy Chief Constable Andy Adams is delighted with the result and said:

A gold banding recognises our achievements and commitment to diversity, inclusion and wellbeing. This benchmark helps us identify what we are doing well and where we need to improve.

Our workforce is the key to our success therefore it is critical we recruit and retain the best people. This accomplishment will support our efforts to further diversify the force and create an environment where all our staff can contribute to providing the best service.

The benchmark measures age, gender and race workplace diversity. It is a management tool to help organisations evaluate their performance, including peer comparisons, and inform evidence-based decision-making around workplace diversity.

BITC works with organisations to ensure that age, gender, race and wellbeing do not limit an employee's engagement and success in the workplace.

Press release: Nearly-new car buyers advised to check tax rates

DVLA is reminding those thinking of changing their car this summer to find out if new tax rates could affect them.

New vehicle tax rates came into force for all cars and some motorhomes registered from 1 April 2017. Those looking to buy a nearly-new car can check online to make sure they know what they'll need to pay.

The amount of tax to pay will depend on the type of vehicle. The standard rates are:

- £140 a year for petrol or diesel vehicles
- £130 a year for alternative fuel vehicles (hybrids, bioethanol and LPG)
- £0 a year for vehicles with zero CO2 emissions

There is an additional payment of £310 per year for 5 years (from the second time the vehicle is taxed), if the vehicle has a list price of more than £40,000 at first registration.

More information on the tax rates can be found at www.gov.uk/newvehicletaxrates.

These changes do not affect cars registered before 1 April 2017.

News story: Sports Grounds Safety Authority Board Member Extended

The Culture Secretary has extended the term of Peter Rowley OBE as a Board Member of the Sports Grounds Safety Authority until 12 November 2017.

Peter Rowley retired as a director and Chief Executive of Darlington Building Society in 2009. Since then Peter has developed a portfolio of interests in sport administration. He is Chairman of The Sports Council Trust Company, Chairman of British Weightlifting, the lead non-executive director of the Sports Grounds Safety Authority, Vice Chairman of StreetGames UK, a trustee of Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation and a trustee of Tees Valley Community Foundation. He has served previously as a board member of Sport England, an independent member of UK Sport's Audit Committee, chairman of SkillsActive UK and a director of Coachwise Ltd. Peter believes passionately in the power of sport to change lives and communities for the better and received the OBE for services to sport administration in the New Year Honours List 2017.

The role is remunerated at £265 per day and the Board meets approximately 6 times per year. This appointment has been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments. The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Under the Code, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election. Peter has declared no such political activity.

News story: Ministers step up engagement with small businesses

At a roundtable with small businesses today, Government Ministers reiterated their determination to have a two way dialogue with small businesses throughout the process of EU exit.

Hosted by the Federation of Small Business, the event was attended by Robin Walker, Minister for Exiting the European Union and Margot James, Minister for Small Business as well as representatives from the FSB and various small businesses.

During the roundtable attendees discussed the important part that the UK's five million small businesses play in the economy and looked at issues such as the Repeal Bill, market access and skills.

It follows a conference held at Chevening House, during which Ministers from the Department for Exiting the EU, the Treasury and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy came together with business leaders to discuss EU exit.

Robin Walker, Minister for Exiting the European Union, said:

Small businesses are the lifeblood of our economy and we want to ensure that they continue to flourish long after we leave the EU.

That is why we are stepping up our engagement with businesses throughout the exit process, ensuring we can help them to capitalise on the opportunities that arise and address the challenges that they may face.

We have been clear that providing businesses with certainty is a key priority and the forthcoming Repeal Bill will give Britain's businesses confidence that they won't face unexpected changes on the day we leave the EU.

Margot James, Small Business Minister, said:

We want the UK to remain the best place in the world to start and grow a business. This is why we are working closely with Britain's small businesses to ensure that the interests of small and medium sized businesses are well represented during the Brexit negotiations.

FSB is helping to ensure that that they play a key role as we deliver a long-term Industrial Strategy that builds on our strengths, as well as ensuring the voice of small businesses are heard loud and clear in our Brexit negotiations.

Mike Cherry, National Chairman of the Federation of Small Business, said:

We are delighted to be hosting Ministers from the Department for Exiting the European Union and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

This is an opportunity for key Ministers, who will be playing a vital role in the exit process, to engage directly with FSB members and discuss their needs in a post-Brexit UK.

FSB has conducted a thorough series of research reports underpinned by in-depth member consultation as to what small businesses want from Brexit, from trade and exports, to jobs and skills, to the replacement of EU funding. And we know that Ministers and civil servants across the Government will be listening and responding to our findings, which will help inform a deal that works for small businesses and so fosters economic growth and job creation.

We will continue to be a constructive partner in these negotiations and ensure that the voice of the UK's 5.5 million small businesses and self-employed is heard loud and clear.

Since last June the Government has been engaging extensively with businesses across the UK, travelling across the country for visits, roundtables and meetings. The Government will continue to have an open dialogue with the FSB and its members throughout the Brexit process.

[Press release: OTS says it is high time to digitise paper stamp duty on shares](#)

The Office of Tax Simplification (OTS) is the independent adviser to government on tax simplification. In this [report on paper stamp duty](#) published today, the OTS takes a wide-ranging look at the potential for paper stamp duty to be reformed, digitised and simplified.

Stamp Duty Land Tax (on land transactions) and Stamp Duty Reserve tax (on most share-trading) have been digitised for some years. But stamp duty itself, which is charged on certificated share transactions taking place outside the CREST settlement system, is still administered by impressing paper stock transfer forms with physical stamps. This is an outdated and cumbersome approach.

Angela Knight CBE, Chair of the OTS Board, said:

In this digital age it is anachronistic to still be stamping paper documents as we did on the 17th century. This results in delays and can cause commercial difficulties, particularly when there is a commercial requirement to register a transfer on the same day as the transaction takes place. This report points the way to both modernise and speed up the process.

Paul Morton, OTS Tax Director, said:

It is clear from our work that there is a significantly greater demand for the facility to register documents on the same day as the transaction than is possible with the current arrangements. Digitisation is the norm across business and commerce of all types. Digitising paper stamp duty, and taking some related simplification steps, will improve the whole process for those currently needing to have documents stamped.

Core recommendations

The core set of recommendations, propose:

- replacing the process that requires sending a paper document to the Birmingham Stamp Office to be stamped, with a digital process
- updating the rules governing company registrars' so that they are able to register transactions on the same day as and when required
- limiting the scope of stamp duty to the transactions it applies to in practice

Further recommendations

In addition, the report makes some more technical simplification proposals including:

- addressing the present archaic way in which stamp duty is calculated in relation to consideration that is difficult to value at the time of the transaction concerned
- bringing stamp duty legislation into one place and within the umbrella of the already digitised Stamp Duty Reserve Tax and then repealing the present stamp duty legislation which is spread across many Acts of Parliament
- ensuring that the digital process is developed in a way which secures the fullest benefits for both those who pay the tax and those who collect it

Notes for editors

Stamp duty was the predecessor tax to Stamp Duty Land Tax (for land transactions since 2003) and Stamp Duty Reserve Tax (on electronic share transactions since 1986). Stamp duty now mainly applies to share transactions undertaken using paper forms.

The OTS advises the Chancellor on tax simplification, challenging tax complexity to help all users of the tax system; it does not implement changes – these are a matter for government and for Parliament.

The OTS team is led by Chairman Angela Knight CBE and Tax Director Paul Morton and has a small staff drawn from HM Treasury, HM Revenue and Customs and the private sector.

The OTS works to improve the experience of all who interact with the tax system. It aims to reduce the administrative burden – which is what people actually encounter in practice – as well as simplifying the rules. Simplification of the technical and administrative aspects of tax are each important, both to taxpayers and HMRC.

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