

Press release: Apply for hedgerows, boundaries, and woodland management plan grants online

From 1 March 2017 applicants for the hedgerows and boundaries and woodland management plan grants can apply online.

Applicants can apply through the [Rural Payments service](#). The online service allows those applying to log on at a time that suits them to submit applications for the [hedgerows and boundaries grant](#) or the [woodland management plan grant](#). Applications can be saved and returned at the applicant's convenience. The online service ensures only eligible fields are included. Instant confirmation is provided once an applicant submits an application.

Customers who already apply for Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) online should find submitting an online application familiar and the service easy to use. Last year 80% of BPS applicants took advantage of applying online.

The woodland management plan grant is open all year round for applications. This year the hedgerow and boundaries grant opened on 1 February and closes on 28 April.

Support is available from Natural England via the Rural Payments helpline on 03000 200 301.

Whilst applicants are encouraged to use the online service, paper applications will still be accepted for the hedgerows and boundaries grant and the woodland management plan grant.

The online service will be extended in spring 2017, when customers will have the option to submit their Countryside Stewardship annual revenue and capital claims.

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Press release: Schools to teach 21st

century relationships and sex education

□□The government has today (1 March 2017) tabled amendments to the [Children and Social Work Bill](#) which will make it a requirement that all secondary schools in England teach relationships and sex education (RSE).

The amendments also allow the government to make regulations requiring personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) to be taught in all schools in England – primary and secondary, maintained and academy – in future.

Relationships education, RSE, and PSHE are designed to ensure pupils are taught the knowledge and life skills they will need to stay safe and develop healthy and supportive relationships, particularly dealing with the challenges of growing up in an online world.

Currently only pupils attending local-authority run secondary schools – which represent around a third of secondary schools – are guaranteed to be offered current sex and relationships education, and PSHE is only mandatory at independent schools. Neither are currently required to be taught in academies.

The government is proposing the introduction of the new subject of 'relationships education' in primary school and renaming the secondary school subject 'relationships and sex education', to emphasise the central importance of healthy relationships. The focus in primary school will be on building healthy relationships and staying safe. As children get older, it is important that they start to develop their understanding of healthy adult relationships in more depth, with sex education delivered in that context.

The statutory guidance for RSE was introduced in 2000 and is becoming increasingly outdated. It fails to address risks to children which have grown in prevalence in recent years, including online pornography, sexting and staying safe online. As a result now is the right time to address these issues.

The government is already taking action to address this with the introduction of a new internet safety green paper later this year, which will set out a series of steps to make the internet a safer place for young people.

This will be complemented by a comprehensive programme of engagement by the Department for Education (DfE) with stakeholders to set out suitable, age-appropriate content on RSE which focuses on mental wellbeing, consent, resilience, age-appropriate relationships and sex education, and keeping safe online. Regulations and statutory guidance will then be subject to full public consultation later this year, and we expect to see children and young people being taught this new curriculum in schools as soon as September 2019.

Schools will have flexibility over how they deliver these subjects, so they can develop an integrated approach that is sensitive to the needs of the local community; and, in the case of faith schools, in accordance with their faith.

Education Secretary Justine Greening said:

RSE and PSHE teach children and young people how to stay safe and healthy, and how to negotiate some of the personal and social challenges they will face growing up and as adults. These subjects form part of the building blocks young people need to thrive in modern Britain. At the moment, too many young people feel they don't have the RSE they need to stay safe and navigate becoming an adult.

It is time to make this change to ensure all children and young people have access to these subjects and to update the current statutory guidance for RSE which was introduced nearly 20 years ago, in 2000. We need high-quality, age-appropriate content that relates to the modern world, addressing issues like cyber bullying, 'sexting' and internet safety.

We will now begin a review and gather expert opinions to ensure these subjects really have a positive impact on young people.

Both young people themselves and parents are calling for a consistent approach on RSE. A survey of 16- to 24-year-olds carried out by the Terence Higgins Trust in July 2016 showed that 99% of young people thought RSE should be mandatory in all schools; and 1 in 7 had not received this education.

The amendments will continue to allow parents a right to withdraw children from sex education, and schools will be required to publish a clear statement of their policy and what will be taught, so that parents can make informed decisions. As is already the case where sex education is currently mandatory, schools will also have flexibility over how they teach these subjects so they can ensure their approach is sensitive to the needs of the local community and, in the case of faith schools, in accordance with the tenets of their faith.

Russell Hobby, General Secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT), said:

NAHT have long advocated age-appropriate sex education and PSHE for all pupils in all schools, to help prepare young people for the challenges they will encounter in their adult lives and the current challenges they will face beyond the school gates. We welcome the duties set out today and look forward to playing our part in ensuring RSE/PSHE delivers for young people.

Barnardo's Chief Executive, Javed Khan, said:

We are thrilled the government has listened to our campaign to provide all school children with age-appropriate school lessons on sex and healthy relationships to help keep them safe. Barnardo's has long campaigned for this vital education so children can better understand the dangers in the real world and online. We believe this will give children the knowledge and skills they need to help prevent them being groomed and sexually exploited.

Sarah Green, Co-director of the End Violence Against Women Coalition, said:

This is a real step forward in ending violence against women and girls and we commend the government for listening to experts and responding. It opens the door to high-quality RSE that will let young people have the essential conversations about consent, respect and LGBT equality. Quality RSE is a chance to talk with young people about how men and women treat each other, and to challenge the attitudes which minimise or make excuses for abuse of women and girls. It is a chance to emphasise such violence is always unacceptable, whether on our streets or in our schools.

1. The government has today (1 March 2017) published a policy statement which sets out the topics that the regulations and statutory guidance will need to reflect, and which the work of DfE will therefore consider.
2. We expect to see children and young people being taught the new curriculum in schools as soon as September 2019.

[Speech: Greg Hands' speech at the Civil Nuclear Showcase 2017](#)

Introduction

Thank you to Paul [Howarth] for that introduction and let me welcome you to the second day of the Civil Nuclear Showcase 2017.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State for International Trade spoke about how the UK nuclear sector remains open for business.

He outlined the huge investment opportunities across the length and breadth of the UK.

And he spoke of Brexit not as a retrenchment of our civil nuclear capability, but quite the opposite.

So, let me be clear.

Our nuclear safeguarding and safety regime will continue to be forward looking.

Our nuclear R&D expertise will remain pride of place.

And, we will enter into new trade agreements that will allow our nuclear programme to excel.

Later this afternoon, you'll hear country briefings on China, France and Central Europe.

You'll see the impressive level of opportunity out there which British expertise can fulfil.

So my message today is simple.

The UK will become the leading international partner of choice in the civil nuclear field – exporting our expertise right across the nuclear life cycle and right across the world.

We will do this by seizing the global opportunity out there, harnessing the UK's world leading capability.

We will ensure that very capability continues to develop and strengthen at home – underpinned by a robust industrial strategy.

And finally government, and in particular my Department for International Trade, will double-down on our support to ensure the UK's nuclear sector continues to grow.

Global opportunity

The very make-up of this room reflects a truly global industry.

From fuel services and waste management companies, to regulators and reactor builders – nuclear spans continents.

In the next 13 years, the overseas market for building new reactors will be worth £930 billion across 30 countries, and around £250 billion will be spent on decommissioning old ones.

In fact by 2030, the UK will be sizing a potential export market of £240 billion.

The opportunity, although impressive in size, should always be seen through

the lens of international standards and values.

The UK is rightly guided by our international non-proliferation obligations in relation to exporting nuclear-related items.

The UN's International Atomic Energy Agency provides a stable global framework, under which UK companies should have the confidence to take advantage of a world of opportunity.

And this confidence is well deserved.

UK export capability

Our world class nuclear supply chain capability is the product of over 60 years of experience and research.

It started with Calder Hall in Cumbria in 1956 – the world's first civil nuclear programme.

From this strong base, UK industry has plans for new nuclear reactors amounting to up to 18 gigawatt of new capacity over the coming years.

It has led some to claim the UK has become the focus of a nuclear renaissance.

Even though we do not have a nuclear reactor vendor of our own, UK companies possess experience in all existing technologies – and even some future ones.

So we're ideally placed to supply and impartially advise global partners on all aspects of nuclear new build.

Our firms have worked on some of the most challenging waste management and decommissioning programmes in the world, including the safe clean-up of nuclear sites from Japan to Germany to the United States.

We are specialists in the fuel life cycle, plant life maintenance and extension, and are also providing the other key skills required to support a nuclear programme – from education and training to financial and legal consultancy.

And this is translating into export success.

From the UAE, to Turkey and Central Europe, British companies have been winning contracts.

But our ability to look abroad depends on being strong at home.

We are focussing on innovative and high quality nuclear manufacturing through our Nuclear Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre, which operates a 'Fit 4 Nuclear' programme to ensure a strong supply chain.

Cutting edge R&D is being developed in centres such as the Dalton Nuclear Institute at the University of Manchester, and plans are now being put in

place for the China-UK Joint Research and Innovation Centre.

And we are ensuring we have the right number of people with the right skills at the right time, through organisations such as the National Skills Academy for Nuclear and the National College for Nuclear.

But it's all very well having a business policy, an infrastructure policy, and a skills policy, but if they don't work together, we'll hit a ceiling.

Our Industrial Strategy joins these up and will unleash our potential.

Where we see opportunities overseas, we encourage UK companies to work together to win these contracts and where there are gaps, we will redirect investment in those areas.

All this shows a capability that is constantly being strengthened, that continues to set global standards, and that will ensure the UK becomes the international partner of choice in nuclear.

Government support

Before I close, I want to talk about the support available that underpins this ambition.

My department's nuclear team in London and our commercial officers based around the world – from Berlin to Beijing, will continue supporting UK businesses operating overseas, whether through operational support or via strategic government to government discussions.

I was in China earlier this year where I met with the China General Nuclear following their investment in the UK last year.

This investment stands to open many opportunities for UK companies throughout the supply chain.

I am pleased to hear that my department and CGN are also holding a related workshop this afternoon, to discuss how to develop a win-win approach to UK-China supply chain collaboration.

But it isn't just support at the diplomatic level.

Financing is being provided by UK Export Finance, the UK's export credit agency which is part of my department.

Just look at Wales based Flamgard Calidair, who, thanks to UKEF, will now provide fire and shut off dampers to the Chernobyl site – demolishing the previous containment building, whilst securing the remaining radioactive material.

And my department will be leading a supply chain mission to Hungary and the Czech Republic in March, as well as missions to the US Waste Management Symposia and the China International Nuclear Exhibition in Beijing.

We want companies from across the UK and across the supply chain signing up.

The level of tailored support on offer for UK companies is as much unprecedented as it is effective.

And the outcomes speak for themselves.

The Department for International Trade has already helped UK firms win hundreds of millions pounds worth of civil nuclear export contracts and we have ambitious targets for the next 5 years.

Conclusion

In conclusion, few industries will have a greater impact on our way of life in the coming decades than nuclear.

I am both delighted and proud that the UK is already seen as a world leader in this sector.

The UK will always be forward looking; we will always allow our companies to excel.

We will truly be the international partner of choice in nuclear.

Over 60 years ago, we helped lead the world in civil nuclear capability. Let's look to reclaim that mantle, starting today.

Thank you.

Speech: Britain is open for business: a commitment to open trade

Good morning.

It is a pleasure to be here today to address the SuperReturn Conference, and so many leading representatives of the Private Equity Industry.

We meet in a climate of growing adversity for global trade and commerce, yet it is a subject that seldom gets the attention it deserves.

I hope today to offer plenty of hope and optimism but it would not be responsible to paint only a partial picture.

The fact remains, that for the first time in decades, the established order of fair, free and open global trade, which has done so much to enrich and empower the world's nations, is under threat.

Between 1985 and 2007, global trade volumes increased dramatically, growing at around twice the rate of GDP.

Since 2012 they have barely kept pace.

Perhaps most significantly, in September last year, the World Trade Organisation downgraded their forecast for global growth in the trade in goods from 2.8% in 2016 to just 1.7% this year.

This is an implicit prediction that, for the first time this century, trade will grow more slowly than GDP.

These predictions would be concerning on their own, but they come at a time when an undercurrent of protectionism is once again beginning to tug at global commerce.

Across the world, barriers to trade are going up and the G7 and G20 are some of the worst culprits when it comes to non-tariff barriers and market access restriction.

Each day, the challenges facing businesses – like yours – who wish to buy, sell and invest freely across the world – are rising.

The WTO, in response, has issued a call to its member states to resist protectionism and ‘get trade moving again’.

It may seem amazing to us that free trade as a concept should face so much opposition.

In recent decades, the liberalisation of Asia’s major economies in particular, has seen millions lifted from poverty.

We have taken more people out of abject poverty in the last 25 years than in all of human history combined.

In western countries, imports and technological advances driven by global competition have seen living standards climb higher than ever before.

And yet, we find the rhetoric of protectionism creeping once more into political and economic debate across the world.

In 1824, the British statesman Thomas Babington Macaulay said that:

“Free trade, one of the greatest blessings which a government can confer on its people, is in almost every country unpopular.”

2 centuries on, his observation is as pertinent as it was then.

It is clear that now, more than ever, free trade needs a champion.

And that is exactly what Britain intends to be.

As one of the world’s largest economies, we have the commercial clout and the political will to make the case not just for free trade but for further trade

liberalisation, working with our partners across the world, including here in Germany, to dismantle tariffs and remove barriers to trade wherever they are found.

For the first time in more than 4 decades, trade is back at the heart of British policymaking.

Yet if trade is to shape Britain's global future, then it must also shape the future of our relationship with the EU.

At the heart of that relationship will be our partnership with Germany.

The United Kingdom is Germany's largest export market in Europe – and second only to the United States globally.

Germany's trade surplus with the UK is also its second largest worldwide, encompassing almost all sectors from textiles to pharmaceuticals, and insurance to R&D services.

In turn, Germany is the destination of over 10% of British exports – our 2 countries have developed a deep and productive economic interdependence.

Yet, as the 2 greatest free trading nations in Europe, we not only share the bonds of commerce and industry, but work closely together to make the case for free and open trade both inside and outside the European Union.

Chancellor Merkel in particular has been a strong advocate of free trade, and her tireless work on European FTAs and staunch defence of commercial liberalisation has been much admired in the UK.

The United Kingdom may have voted to leave the European Union, but we will never leave Europe.

Our partners across the continent will remain among our closest friends and allies in commerce and in security .

We want to realise a new relationship with Europe based upon open trade and mutual prosperity.

Given the challenges facing commercial interests across the globe, we should all consider whether we really want to create barriers where none currently exist.

The OECD has recently published a paper documenting the ever-increasing interdependence of the global economy, highlighting the number of countries whose exports contain a high proportion of imports, all competing in the market place.

Indeed, so much of world trade relies on the existence of complex global value chains.

So let me be very frank, any new impediments to trade and investment in Europe would not only be politically irresponsible, but economically

dangerous – and not just for Europe but for the wider global economy too.

We do not act in a political vacuum and our economic action will have global implications.

I must, at this point, be unequivocal – Britain wants the EU to succeed, and to succeed in a competitive and open trading environment.

Our referendum result was in no way a desire to see the EU broken or diminished.

The United Kingdom may have chosen a different path, but we will not reject those values that still bind us to our European neighbours.

Freedom, equality, democracy, the rule of law – these have always formed the basis of our relationship with our European neighbours, and will continue to do so far into the future.

From a purely practical standpoint, too, it is in the interests of the British government to have a strong, stable and prosperous European Union as our immediate neighbour.

Our co-operation on defence, intelligence and security has been one of the most successful such projects in history working alongside our key allies in North America.

Every day, Britain, Germany, France and our other partners work tirelessly to protect the citizens of Europe, tackling every threat from crime to terrorism to foreign military powers.

Economically, too, the benefits of continued partnership are clear to see.

Commercial and economic interdependence is the future – protectionism is no longer simply import tariffs and border checks by uniformed customs men, but anything that jeopardises the free flow of resources and capabilities between companies located in different countries.

These networks cross every country in Europe, economic ties that bind us together.

And standing here in Berlin, I must say that few nations on Earth understand this as well as Germany.

The simple reality is that for Britain to wish failure upon the EU would be to wish failure upon ourselves, and vice versa.

The economic destinies of Britain and Europe, and the prosperity of our people, are too closely enmeshed.

To have a future that does not involve friendship and co-operation is simply inconceivable but the British people have made it clear that they want a different structural relationship with our European partners – a decision the British government will fully respect.

As Britain's first-ever Secretary of State for International Trade, it is my department's responsibility to attract investors to the UK, and to protect our international reputation as one of the most business-friendly nations on earth.

The Prime Minister talked about her ambitions for 'Global Britain' and I, and my Ministers, have travelled extensively with this same message.

We repeat the message that Britain is open for business.

It may be a well-used mantra, but that does not make it any less true.

The simple fact is that Britain remains one of the best places on Earth to do business.

I have no need to espouse to you the sheer capability of the City of London as a financial centre – the greatest concentration of capability and expertise in the world.

This capability and expertise doesn't solely benefit the UK. London is one of the global cities: its success is an enormous benefit to businesses across Europe. We all have a shared interest in supporting the role London plays.

The underlying strengths that have allowed the City to become such a dominant player are still very much apparent.

Our regulations are clear, our legal system fair and open, and our tax rates comparatively light.

We have a skilled workforce, access to some of the world's best universities and an increasingly strong and world-leading research base.

Our mother tongue is the natural language of international business.

The UK lies in the right time zone to trade with Asia in the morning and the United States at night.

Many European countries boast some of these advantages, but I would argue that only in the United Kingdom are investors guaranteed them all.

It is small wonder that the London Stock Exchange remains Europe's choice from which to launch an IPO or manage an investment fund.

Financial services will have to play a central role in establishing, and supporting, the post-Brexit commercial environment across Europe.

It will be driven, of course, by Britain and Germany, the twin hearts of European commerce – it is a relationship that British businesses and British politicians alike hold particularly dear.

I am only too aware that business can manage risk but dislikes uncertainty. Politicians, both in the UK and across the continent, therefore have a role to play to avoid brinkmanship and embrace pragmatism.

It should be the interests of business and consumers that underpin future negotiations, not wrangling at the political level.

If we are to maintain the confidence of our investors and businesses, then we must strive to minimise disruption at every point of the process.

The most important thing to remember, though, is that we are starting from a point of maximal convergence.

The greatest barrier for those nations wishing to trade into the single market, particularly when it comes to financial services, is regulatory equivalence.

Going forward, then, Britain is in a historically unique position.

This is not an accession negotiation.

In the past, many of those countries seeking access to the Single Market were those newly liberated from the Soviet bloc, striving to bring a sense of order to their economies and regulatory systems.

Clearly, Britain does not fall into this category.

Instead, we will be looking to sell our services into the single market from an equal position, abiding by regulations that Britain helped to design and still implements.

We are already at the point of maximum equivalence – so disruption is not inevitable.

If the UK works with Germany and our other European partners, recognising that we are starting from a position of unity, not division, then there is no need to disrupt trade, no need to erect barriers, and no need for any investor or business to feel anything but optimism for the future.

Above all else, we must make the prosperity and security of our people the guiding principle of any negotiation.

If we willingly forgo this prosperity, then the burden will fall most heavily on the shoulders of the poorest.

For free and open trade is progressive, creating choice for consumers and helping incomes go further.

Protectionism on the other hand, is regressive, hitting those with the lowest incomes hardest.

The economic wellbeing of our citizens should be paramount, the driver of our public policy.

Prosperity is the British government's guiding principle – yet we recognise that mere policy cannot provide jobs, pay wages, or raise taxes.

It is you – the wealth creators – who are the key to the future.

That is why my department, and the British government, will strive to make the UK the most attractive place to do business – strengthening our economic fundamentals to ensure that we remain at the forefront of global competition.

We will ensure that Britain is a hub of global commerce, a link to an increasingly interconnected world and all the opportunities that entails.

Out of Brexit, a Global Britain will be born: the most ardent advocate for free trade anywhere in the world.

In Germany, we know that we have a longstanding ally in this endeavour.

If we all work for the benefits of our people there is so much that we can achieve together.

Thank you.

One month to go until new vehicle tax rates come into force

There's only one month to go until the way [vehicle tax is calculated](#) will change.

As the changes will only affect new cars and some motorhomes, we thought we'd have a look to see which areas registered the highest number of new vehicles last year.



Top ten postcodes for new vehicle registrations in 2016

1. Birmingham (B) – 205,156
2. Milton Keynes (MK) – 121,896
3. Guildford (GU) – 90,886
4. Peterborough (PE) – 83,756
5. Leicester (LE) – 79,376
6. Bristol (BS) – 69,763
7. Swindon (SN) – 69,240
8. Slough (SL) – 69,186
9. Reading (RG) – 68,996
10. Northern Ireland (BT) – 68,859

(Source: DVLA)

Get the facts: gov.uk/newvehicletaxrates

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The Birmingham postcode area was busiest buying new vehicles, with over 200,000 being registered.

Birmingham was followed by Milton Keynes and Guildford.

It's no great surprise that postcodes in densely populated areas made the top 10, but it's interesting that Glasgow (67,780), Manchester (32,177) and Liverpool (26,756) were just outside.

Not everybody will be affected by the changes immediately. The changes only apply to brand new cars and some motorhomes registered with DVLA on or after 1 April 2017. But we still wanted to make sure that everyone is aware at the same time, so we've been [blogging regularly](#) to let you know what DVLA's been doing to get ready for the changes. We've been busy in other ways too, including:

- working very closely with stakeholders to make sure that they're aware of the changes, including several webinars, such as for the fleet industry
- [developing a new service](#) to register new vehicles which will launch later this year.
- launching a publicity campaign that's being run across social media, blogs and messages on DVLA literature
- getting our contact centre ready, who have an automated telephone service to quickly answer your questions

The changes take effect from 1 April 2017, so make sure you have a look at the [new vehicle tax rates](#) to see if they affect you.

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