

[News story: Business Secretary and Ministers hold meeting with leading retailers](#)

Business Secretary Greg Clark chaired a roundtable today (22 February 2017) with the country's top retailers and trade bodies to discuss the sector's priorities and how the government's [Industrial Strategy](#) can help the industry respond to future opportunities and challenges.

At the meeting, Greg Clark stressed the vital role the UK retail sector has as a driving force in our economy, and the critical part it has to play in delivering the government's vision of an economy which works for everyone. The Business Secretary was joined by Small Business and Consumer Minister Margot James and Jane Ellison, Financial Secretary to the Treasury. They met chief executives from the UK's top retailers including ASOS, Boots, Shop Direct, Co-op Group, Dixons Carphone, Sainsbury's-Argos and Superdrug as well as key industry trade bodies, the British Retail Consortium (BRC), the Federation of Small Businesses and British Independent Retailers Association.

Following the meeting, Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

"The retail sector makes an invaluable contribution to our economy, delivering £340 billion of sales in 2015 alone. It is vitally important that government and industry work closely together to help the sector create high skilled and high paying jobs across the UK, improve productivity and shape the future of retail in the UK.

"The retail roundtable was a great opportunity to discuss the sector's priorities and how the government can support it through our Industrial Strategy, helping it build on its existing strengths, address challenges and seize new opportunities."

Helen Dickinson OBE, Chief Executive of the British Retail Consortium said:

"We are committed to ensuring that the retail industry is able to maximise its future contribution to the UK's success. There is a strong partnership role for the retail industry to play in assisting in the development of the government's Industrial Strategy, to contribute to a strong British economy in the future.

"The Industrial Strategy is an opportunity to collaborate to shape the implications of the industry's transformation for the benefit of our customers, the workforce and the government's productivity agenda."

During the meeting the retail sector presented their initial thinking on a potential sector deal with government, including how skills, trade and place based activity could help drive up the productivity, growth and sustainability of the sector.

As well as getting feedback from retailers on how the government can support the sector through its Industrial Strategy, other topics that were discussed included the future direction of the sector and how it can help improve UK productivity.

A full list of participants:

- Amazon
- Asda
- ASOS
- Associated British Foods (Primark)
- Association of Convenience Stores
- British Independent Retailers Association
- British Retail Consortium
- Co-op
- Dixons Carphone
- Federation of Small Businesses
- GFirst LEP
- John Lewis Partnership
- Kingfisher
- Lloyds Pharmacy
- Marks and Spencer
- WM Morrisons
- National Federation of Retail Newsagents
- Sainsbury's-Argos
- Shop Direct
- Superdrug (Hutchison Whampoa Europe Ltd)
- Tesco
- Walgreens Boots Alliance

[News story: Crime news: LGFS consultation and fee cut update](#)

From:

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Consultation on reforming payments through the Litigators' Graduated Fee Scheme and changing rates for court appointee work is now open.

Proposals to change how payments are calculated for Crown Court work are set out in a 6-week consultation called 'Litigators' Graduated Fee Scheme and Court Appointees'.

The consultation opened on 10 February and closes on 24 March 2017. It proposes changing the basis on which LGFS payments are calculated and capping payments to court appointees at legal aid rates.

Second fee cut

The government has said that it is minded not to reinstate the second (8.75%) fee cut for defence litigators that was suspended in April 2016 for a period of 12 months.

This is subject to the outcome of the consultations on proposals for 'LGFS and Court Appointees'.

Partnership working on LGFS

The government wants to work with the Law Society and other representative bodies to reform LGFS so that it better measures the relative complexity of cases.

The idea is to reduce or remove reliance on counting Pages of Prosecution Evidence (PPE). In the short term, the government would also like to act quickly to lower the upper limit for counting PPE.

PPE is no longer seen as the most effective way of assessing how much work a litigator needs to do on individual cases.

Payments to court appointees

The consultation also seeks views on capping payments to court appointees at legal aid rates.

Court appointees are paid at rates that are significantly higher than legal aid rates. This is for carrying out work that is very similar to criminal legal aid work.

The government view is that these higher rates cannot be justified.

Further information

[MoJ consultation: LGFS and court appointees](#)

[Press release: Town's flood gates to be replaced](#)

From:

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22 February 2017

Part of:

Environment Agency hosts drop-in event where community can find out more about Yarm flood gates replacement.

Residents in Yarm are invited to a community drop-in this week to find out more about Environment Agency work to replace the flood gates in the town.

The project will start in April and is expected to be complete by June, taking around 12 weeks.

There are 30 flood gates along the flood defence in Yarm, and as part of the work some of the gates may be replaced and others may be removed and the flood wall bricked up, subject to further discussions with residents.

The work will start by replacing the flood gates along True Lover's Walk riverside path, starting with flood gates at West Street and working towards Silver Street.

Residents are invited to find out more at a community event taking place at Yarm Town Hall on Friday 24 February. They can drop in any time between 3pm and 6pm.

Project Manager Neil Smith said:

The gates are being replaced because many of the existing flood gates are approaching the end of their usable life. To maintain the current standard of protection for the town it's essential these gates are replaced.

By carrying out this work we will ensure the town continues to be protected from flooding from the River Tees in the future. I'd urge residents to come along to the event where they can find out more about the work we are carrying out in the town.

Work is also already underway to carry out improvements at the Boat Landing stage. Some wall coping stones and block paving have been repaired and new handrails will be put up along the waterside of the boat landing in May.

In addition, there will be restoration and repainting of the perimeter fence and replacement of benches and litter bins in the area.

Press release: Green light for North Tyneside sea defence scheme

A revised scheme to strengthen and safeguard sea defences – which has saved more than £1m of public money – has been given the go-ahead.

North Tyneside Council's Planning Committee has approved proposals for the sea defence scheme at the Central Lower Promenade in Whitley Bay, which will protect homes, businesses and the surrounding area.

It means vital work can now get underway to refurbish the structure, which is around 100 years old and is reaching the end of its serviceable life.

Elected Mayor Norma Redfearn said:

This is yet more great news for Whitley Bay. The Central Lower Promenade really needs important structural work to be carried out and the general appearance of the area is in need of improvement.

The scheme promises to achieve just that by strengthening and safeguarding sea defences and giving this stretch of the coastline a major boost. It will also save a significant amount of public money and takes into account ideas and suggestions raised by residents.

The revised scheme, which has received strong public support, involves building a new rear wall and strengthening the existing sea wall on the lower promenade.

It was drawn up after the Mayor decided the original plans and proposed price was unacceptable and a value for money exercise was carried out, which has resulted in savings of more than £1m.

It has also allowed the opportunity to include some suggestions from residents.

The project, which is being funded jointly by the council and partners Northumbrian Water and the Environment Agency, will be carried out in partnership with Hartlepool Borough Council.

An open space will be created on the lower walkway with new seating, providing a great opportunity for leisure activities and events.

The design also incorporates a commercial opportunity for 'pop-up' style stalls/units on the lower promenade.

The wide upper footway will be refurbished and enhanced while the design also includes the Mayor's commitment to replacing the balustrades.

The work, which is due to be complete in winter 2017, will complement the improvements being made to the Northern Promenade.

The Central Lower Promenade scheme is part of the council's £36m Seafront Master Plan, which aims to breathe new life into the coast between Cullercoats Bay and St Mary's Island.

As part of the Master Plan, restoration work to return the Spanish City Dome to its former glory is continuing apace, a new Premier Inn is nearing completion next door, improvement work – including new surfacing and seating – is taking place along the Northern Promenade, efforts are underway to secure funding to refurbish St Mary's Lighthouse and a number of private sector schemes are also underway.

[DVLA gets out and about to the Motorcycle Trade Expo](#)

Back in September 2016 we blogged about how DVLA is developing a [new web service](#) for our stakeholder customers to register new vehicles.

Since then we have continued to develop the service based on customer feedback.

Last month Alison Wolley (Corporate Services Relationship Manager) and I were invited to exhibit at the [Motorcycle Trade Expo](#) event in Coventry by the Motorcycle Industry Association.



This is an ideal opportunity to spend time with our customers and chat with them face to face. We set up camp in the 'Knowledge Shop' section of the show – a perfect place to showcase the new service. And that's just what we did during the 3 day event.

We demonstrated and answered lots of queries about all aspects of vehicle registration and licensing. Knowing that there were customers still using our paper process, we were also able to showcase all of the digital services DVLA offers to help dealers registering motorcycles.



Being present at events such as these is invaluable in helping us to get a deeper understanding of the industry in general and it was great to see this reciprocated in the feedback we received about the new service:

- “this will save me a lot of time and money”
- “this is so much easier to use”
- “this looks like a service I could use, I would be able to register the vehicle much quicker to allow my customer to use their bike”

Many thanks to all that took the time to visit us and we look forward to seeing you again soon at another event.

If you want to be involved in testing the new service please contact us at ved.reform@dvla.gsi.gov.uk

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