News story: Culture Secretary Reappoints two Historic England Commissioners

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The Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, has re-appointed Alex Balfour and Victoria Harley as Commissioners for Historic England until 31st May 2021

Alex Balfour

Alex Balfour is a globally recognised leader in building and digital capability and optimising digital performance for sport, media, consumer and entertainment brands. Alex is currently Chief Executive Officer of Digital Brand Services. Previously Alex was Chief Digital Officer of Haymon Boxing, the creators of Premier Boxing Champions which reintroduced boxing to prime time network television in the USA for the first time in 30 years.

Before that Alex Balfour was Head of New Media for the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG). At LOCOG he built a team from scratch that has delivered 77 digital channels to a worldwide audience of over 150 million during the Games in 2012. Alex's career in digital media began in 1994. Since then he has edited GE'97, the UK's first General Election Website, made the first consumer Internet call to a traditional telephone and developed the first online government consultation. He went on to become part of the team that produced the Guardian Newspaper's first significant websites.

Victoria Harley

Victoria Harley is a manager of Brampton Bryan Estate, Herefordshire, and concentrates on preservation and reuse of traditional historic buildings, together with landscape conservation.

Through links with the Historic Houses Association, she has wide experience in the management of historic houses. She was previously director of Sotheby's Carpet Department and latterly a freelance consultant.

She served on the National Trust Midlands Advisory Board for seven years and was a trustee of the Offa's Dyke Association. Victoria is a member of the Hereford Cathedral Fabric Advisory Committee and is a governor of two schools. Victoria was appointed as an English Heritage Commissioner in 2014. She serves additionally on the Historic Estate Conservation Committee, the

Designation Review Committee, and the Ditherington Flax Mills Programme Board.

Both Alex and Victoria receive remuneration of £4090 per annum. This reappointment has been made in accordance with the OCPA Code of Practice. It is a requirement of the Code that political activity by those appointed is declared. Alex Balfour has declared that he has not carried out any such political activity. Victoria Harley has confirmed that she assisted a local Conservative candidate on the general election day in 2015.

[Press release: RPC releases latest report](#)

Having reviewed 318 submissions in 2016, the [RPC reports](#) a significant overall decline in the proportion of impact assessments which were fit for purpose at first submission, coupled with a continuing absence of the biggest post-implementation reviews (PIRs). The most common issues relating to the quality of initial submissions are: missing costs, unjustified assumptions, lack of clarity in impacts on small and micro businesses. In addition the Committee has only seen a modest number of (mainly minor) PIRs over the last year and is concerned that reviews of significant measures such as major pensions regulation have yet to appear.

Michael Gibbons CBE, RPC Chairman, said:

"As the RPC takes over as Chair of the RegWatch Europe network and we collectively shine a light on European regulation and international best practice, I am disappointed that our government departments have not really embraced the opportunity to learn from their experiences of regulation in the last Parliament. I am heartened, though, that the National Audit Office (NAO) and the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (PAC) are joining us in the call for the monitoring and evaluation of bigger measures and that departmental analysis should focus more on societal impacts than at present.

"Although we are concerned that the overall quality of first time submissions has declined, with 28% receiving 'not fit for purpose' notices over 2016, there are some strong examples of good practice and some departments that consistently produce excellent assessments such as DWP, HSE, and DEFRA. We are also pleased with the general quality of the small number of submissions we've seen from regulators which have only recently come into scope of our scrutiny."

Frances O'Grady TUC General Secretary said:

"I believe that it is important that any new regulation should have to be shown to be of benefit and the RPC has an important role to play as is shown in the report being published today. I also think that it is important that the RPC is given the ability to declare not fit for purpose those Impact Assessments that do not reasonably assess the benefits or costs to wider society, as proposed last year by the Public Accounts Committee."

Adam Marshall, Director General, British Chambers of Commerce, said:

"As we enter a period of transition and change, it is vital that any and all regulatory changes due to affect British business are rigorously justified.

"It is disappointing to see that many Government departments have slipped backwards, and are not completing impact assessments to the highest standards.

"The need for scrutiny is greater than ever, and the Regulatory Policy Committee has a crucial and abiding role to play. This report is a timely reminder that government departments must justify regulatory changes properly — particularly at a time when businesses are clear that significant regulatory changes could dent both confidence and investment."

Martin McTague, Policy Director at the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), said:

"The excellent work of the Regulatory Policy Committee once again shows the need for Ministers to improve the performance of the government departments they lead. This annual report reveals how many departments are slipping when measuring the regulatory burden they place on SMEs. The RPC has found gaping holes in impact assessments, making it impossible to identify the true cost of regulation on small businesses — something that we have found most recently with HM Treasury's assessment of mandatory quarterly tax reporting. As the UK defines its approach to regulation post-Brexit, it's more vital than ever the Government has a clear picture of the burden of regulation on small firms."

Josh Hardie, CBI Deputy Director-General, said:

"Thanks to the scrutiny of the Regulatory Policy Committee, businesses can be confident that regulation is grounded in a strong evidence base. It has an important role in holding government to account."

Looking to the future the RPC will:

- continue to work with departments and regulators to improve the quality of their analysis
- continue to remind departments and regulators of the importance of

considering the impact of their actions on small businesses and wider society

- press for assurances that the government's promise of a more efficient and proportionate system doesn't translate into lower level scrutiny, reduced evidence or even reduced scrutiny of policies, e.g. at consultation stage
- scrutinise the government's assessment of the impacts of the Great Repeal Bill and of subsequent Brexit related changes to the UK's regulatory framework.

NOTES TO EDITOR

1. The Regulatory Policy Committee (RPC) is the independent advisory body set up to provide external, transparent, real time scrutiny on the quality of evidence and analysis supporting regulatory changes affecting business and civil society.

2. We give Ministers opinions in advance, to help ensure decisions on legislative proposals are based on a robust evidence base, which provides businesses and the public with confidence that the government's claims on regulatory reform are credible.

3. RPC response to PAC & NAO reports can be found here:
   https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rpc-response-to-pac-report
   https://www.gov.uk/government/news/rpc-response-to-nao-report—2

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1. 318 first-time submissions from depts: a. 72% were rated fit for purpose as first submitted b. 28% received initial review notices (IRNs) or red-rated opinions

2. Decline from 80% of submissions that were rated fit for purpose as first submitted between 2012 and 2015.

3. 19 first-time submissions from Regulators, 89% were fit for purpose – an improved performance on departments.

[Speech: Big data in government: the challenges and opportunities](#)

Ladies and Gentlemen, good morning.

I'd like to begin by thanking Reform for giving me the opportunity to address you today. I want to talk to you about the potential of big data in government — and the hurdles we face along the way.

We often hear that this is the "age of data", or that data is the raw material of a new industrial revolution. There's truth in this. And there's huge opportunity.

Data can truly be a catalyst for a society, an economy, a country that works for everyone.

Of course, data isn't new. There has always been data. The Domesday Book is data. The Rosetta Stone is data.

But the rapid advances in technology and the development of analytical tools and techniques mean we can now gather and share data in huge quantities. We can process and analyse it at previously unimaginable speed. We can draw conclusions and create policies and services that reflect how people live now.

And we can help them live better, more securely, more healthily and more prosperously as a result.

Data entrepreneurs are mining public sector data to create apps and services to make our lives more convenient. Services driven by open data are already giving people more choice in where they get their healthcare, where they live and where their children go to school. There's even a Great British Public Toilet app — a sort of relief map of the country!

In government, we get this. We've always held enormous quantities of data — now we need to make sure we use it properly. Getting this right is the next phase of public service modernisation.

That's why this month we have published the [Government Transformation strategy](#). And the Digital Economy Bill is in the last stage of its journey into law.

There are 3 key areas of opportunity that we need to grasp:

- first, improving the experience of the citizen
- second, making government more efficient
- third, boosting business and the wider economy.

The impact of data analytics and big data in our lives — for example the way online retailers tailor their recommendations for the food, books and music

we buy – is quite familiar.

Less has been said about the transformative power of this technology for the delivery of high-quality public services. And it's time that changed.

With the evidence of data we can spend less time developing policy and services that don't work, and instead focus on continuously improving those that do.

I want people to turn to digital public services as readily and confidently as they do when shopping, socialising or checking bus times.

By doing so, we can actually change the way citizens interact with us – making the relationship we have with them more transparent, more responsive, and based on increasing levels of trust.

For big service delivery departments like the Home Office, HMRC and DWP, data analytics means the ability to search across organisational data sets. It can provide data for operational teams to put into practical effect.

In DWP, for example, providing job seekers with more targeted advice, and opportunities that closely match their personal profiles. The department is also working on data-informed tools, such as interactive visualisations of benefit claimant trends.

There are examples at home and abroad where data is being used to address people's real concerns about their daily lives; providing solutions that were not available before.

In June last year, for example, Land Registry and partners published the first UK House Price Index, and provided a single source of information as opposed to the multiple competing versions which existed before.

Land Registry data has also been used to create a range of information services. From whether rude-sounding street names have an impact on house values – (they do!); to more serious matters, such as whether your home is on a floodplain.

Land Registry's Flood Risk Indicator service uses data from the Environment Agency to identify flood risk for any registered piece of land within England and Wales.

The Companies House Service gives us free access to real-time information on companies. It's receiving millions of search requests every day from people checking supplier and customer information.

The service can also be used for more mundane but practical reasons – if you're getting in builders to do work on your home, you can go on the Companies House website and check them out first.

Healthcare is another exciting area. Moorfields Eye Hospital and DeepMind Health are partners in a research project that could lead to earlier detection of eye diseases.

At the moment, clinicians rely on complex digital eye scans. 3,000 of these scans are made every week at Moorfields. But traditional tools can't explore them fully, and analysis takes time.

Moorfields will share a data set of one million anonymised scans with DeepMind, who will analyse them using machine-learning technology. This can detect and learn patterns from data in seconds, to quickly diagnose whether a condition is urgent.

With sight loss predicted to double by 2050, the use of cutting-edge technology is absolutely vital. The right treatment at the right time can prevent many cases of blindness or partial sightedness. Up to 98% of sight loss resulting from diabetes, for example, can be prevented by early detection and treatment.

Analysing data can also play a direct and powerful role in protecting the most vulnerable in society.

The Home Office Child Abuse Image Database has transformed the investigation of child abuse crimes and child protection. It won the Civil Service Innovation Challenge in 2015.

The database brings together all the images of abuse that police find. Using the images' unique identifiers and metadata, they can check devices they've seized from suspects against the material on the database much more quickly.

Previously a case involving, say, 10,000 images, would typically take up to three days to review. Now, it can be reviewed in an hour.

So, we have a process that is cheaper, less labour-intensive and more efficient. This is all good. And it makes the investigation and prosecution of these appalling crimes vastly more effective.

There are also examples of government data meeting needs that more of us will be familiar with — like tax.

Personal tax accounts from HMRC now take a real-time digital approach. For the first time you can log in when you like, check your tax information and manage your details online in one place. More than 8 million citizens have now signed up, including some of you here today, I expect. HMRC's digital team now has around 30 new online services in development.

Government open data, combined with digital technology, can also fuel an open economy. It will provide information that entrepreneurs, data start-ups and the general public can use.

In 2015, the digital sector contributed £118 billion to the economy, supporting over 1.4 million jobs.

The UK Government was an early world leader in open data. So far, we've released over 30,000 non-personal data sets in machine-readable formats, for no cost, and open for anyone to use or build upon. This has enabled the creation of innovative products that deliver value for citizens.

So far, these data releases have been turned into over 400 different apps. You may well have used some of them yourselves:

- the Floodalerts API: which uses Environment Agency data to provide 15-minute updates about flood risk
- UK Food Hygiene: which lets you see take-away and restaurant food hygiene ratings to help you make decisions on where to eat out
- FillThatHole: a site for reporting potholes and other road hazards across the UK using ONS Census geography data
- There are also apps for finding the best dentists, GPs, schools and universities.

The list of sectors tapping into Defra group data from Lidar (the airborne, laser equivalent of radar) is truly remarkable. British wine producers are using the terrain-mapping data to help them decide where best to plant vines, and if the recent prominence of English sparkling wine is anything to go by — they are having great success!

Architects are using it to build a model of London as they plan the next high-rise building; computer game developers to build new landscapes for Minecraft; and archaeologists to discover lost networks of Roman roads. In October last year alone there were almost 21,000 downloads of Lidar data from data.gov.uk.

Some companies don't only use open public data to build a business but also to act as a positive disruptive force. FoodTrade, for example, maps the food supply chain system, making it easier for people to buy and sell fresh local produce.

And other start-ups are using open data in ways that boost the economy by providing data analysis tools and data products that support the growth of SMEs.

A firm called GeoLytix offers a range of products based on geospatial data — giving smaller companies access to information that they would not be able to do on their own, and helping them to solve business location issues in the process.

So as we look to improve the availability, quality and use of government data as the basis for fully transformed public services, it will also provide a new stimulus for data-based businesses.

Because government data is public data we have a duty to use it well and open it up where possible — and we have to be seen to do so cost-effectively, efficiently, proportionately and appropriately.

But it is not without challenges, and I want to address two in particular:

1. Winning and retaining public confidence
2. Building Civil Service capability in how we collect, store, analyse, share and use data

Public trust is absolutely critical to achieving our ambition for a data-

driven government.

Information and data is power. Which is why, historically, the ability to communicate and understand it was so jealously guarded. Now that we are openly releasing information, we have to do so responsibly.

Trust means giving people confidence that their data is used appropriately and effectively, and that it's secure, particularly when it's being shared by different authorities. That trust has to be earned.

In partnership with civil society, GDS has published an ethical framework for data science in government. It is based on the key principles of data security, openness, user need and public benefit. And it highlights the importance of ensuring the data and models we are using are robust.

And to complement this, the Office for National Statistics has adopted a framework called 'The Five Safes' for building and maintaining trust and confidence:

Safe people Safe projects Safe settings Safe data Safe output

And we are looking outside of government too. The Royal Society and British Academy are conducting an independent investigation into how data is, and could be, used by government, and the types of governance that may be required.

We need to make sure we take the public with us on this journey, and maintain their trust that we are using and sharing data responsibly and effectively.

Transparency is part of this — transparency of evidence, 'showing your working', and opening up to greater scrutiny the data and analysis on which we base policy decisions. For transactions (such as driving licence and passport applications) users can now see the data government holds about them and change it if it is wrong.

We must also have the confidence that a person accessing a service is who they say they are, and we must do that in a way which the public trust.

Verify — the government identity service for citizens — is enabling people to access a whole range of online government services easily, securely and in a way which builds their trust. By 2020, we are aiming to get 25 million people using the service.

But providing transactional services is only part of what government does — it also uses data to: identify individuals for support where there is wider impact on society — such as elderly people in fuel poverty; or to develop policy, plan services and assess outcomes; or to promote innovation, or allow citizens to hold us to account.

The introduction of new legislation on data access in the Digital Economy Bill is designed to give confidence that government is doing the right thing.

The Bill provides a robust legal framework for sharing data between public

authorities, where there is a clear public need and benefit.

A case in point is the Troubled Families Programme to get children back into school, put adults in employment or on a path back to work, and cut youth crime and anti-social behaviour. To identify families in need of help, public authorities need to see information held by other authorities.

The Bill also makes provision for public authorities sharing information with energy companies to identify customers living in fuel poverty so they can automatically receive support – such as energy bill rebates or energy-saving measures.

We see a clear link between public trust and government capability in its handling of data.

A May 2016 survey for the Government Data Science Partnership showed that public approval for government sharing data is actually quite high when they accept that it is used in measured, proportionate and targeted ways. So the way we collect, store and release our data must keep pace with expectations.

We've introduced the first six developer-friendly open registers of reliable and up-to-date data on specific areas that we can use with confidence to build a service. These include countries, territories and English local authority registers – with more to come, covering everything from police stations and schools, to doctors and courts.

We need to think about the collection and storage of data as part of core national infrastructure, in the same way as we think of our road and rail systems, energy supply, and telecommunications networks as infrastructure.

To give confidence that we handle data and can realise its potential effectively, we also need the right people with the right skills in the right place, in government and across the economy.

And we are still short of the key data science skills in Government.

Such a shortage is not peculiar to this country – research in the US predicts that by 2018 they will be short of 190,000 data scientists.

Here, in the UK Civil Service, we are growing the specialist data science community in a variety of ways – from direct recruitment to training to defining new career pathways for analysts.

The Data Science Accelerator Programme is tapping into the 3,000 or so analysts from other disciplines looking to develop their data science skills

A Data Science Campus opened its doors at ONS's headquarters in Newport last October. And the first intake for a new Apprenticeship in Data Analytics started work on their two-year vocational training programme at the end of 2016.

And because everyone at every level should have an appreciation of the power of data, we're developing a programme in data literacy for non-data

specialists. The Digital Academy will provide skills training right across government for up to 3,000 people a year.

Together, these measures are nudging us towards a cultural shift in the status of data in government and those who work with it.

And how Government uses data in service of the citizen will define how the citizen experiences Government. When we get it right, we will deliver the right service at the right time to the right person. And that is our goal.

So — to conclude.

Data underpins everything we do — but we could do so much more. The possibilities are tremendously exciting: Services for the the citizen that are both targeted and responsive; More effective and more efficient government; and Data as an enabler of growth in the wider economy.

And we have to step up our efforts. We have announced that we plan to appoint a new Chief Data Officer, whose role will be to oversee this agenda, and a cross-government senior Data Advisory Board.

But it is not without challenge, and we need your help. We need to partner with you to help us navigate the difficult ethical judgements about how to share data in the right way.

We need you to tell us which data you want in the open and how, and we need to share scarce resources to build toward our overall goal.

Data is at the heart of 21st century government. It puts the citizen front and centre in public service delivery. It powers effective decision making on the front line. It makes government work for everyone, by better reflecting the world that we live in.

We are at the start of this journey — but I can't wait to see how we can accelerate from here toward a public sector which is truly in service of the citizen.

[Trial of Gaddafi regime a 'missed opportunity for justice,' says new UN report](#)

21 February 2017 – Pointing out that the recent trial in Libya of members of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's regime fell short of international fair-trial standards, the United Nations human rights wing and the UN mission in the North African country called on authorities to address flaws identified in a

new report.

In the report issued today, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) also recognized the challenge of trying former members of the regime, especially amid armed conflict and political polarization, but noted that the trial raised concerns such as serious violations of due process, including prolonged periods of incommunicado detention for the defendants amid allegations of torture which were not properly investigated.

&#8220Holding perpetrators responsible for violations is vitally important but accountability should be the result of due process and a fair trial,&#8221 said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein in a news release detailing the report's findings on the trial proceedings that examined violations of human rights during the 2011 civil uprising that toppled the long-time Libyan leader's regime.

&#8220This trial was a missed opportunity for justice and for the Libyan people to have the chance to confront and reflect on the conduct of the former regime.&#8221

Of the 37 members of the former regime under trial &#8211 including Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, former intelligence chief Abdullah al-Senussi, and former Prime Minister Al-Baghdadi al-Mahmudi &#8211 six defendants were sentenced to death; eight given life sentences; 15 others jail terms of five to 12 years; four were acquitted on all charges; and one was referred to a mental health institution.

UNSMIL and OHCHR closely monitored the case from the pre-trial phase through the court proceedings, which began in March 2014, to the verdict in July 2015. They also interviewed many of the defendants and their relatives and lawyers, reviewed the case dossier and judgement, and had extensive discussions with Libyan officials and Libyan and international experts.

They noted that the public prosecutor's office, in particular, provided documentation and was available for discussion of the trial throughout the process. However, they also said that the defendants' lawyers complained repeatedly of difficulties in meeting defendants in private and accessing documentation.

&#8220The right to defence was also undermined by the fact that no prosecution witnesses were called to testify in court &#8211 the prosecution's case was only briefly presented during the court sessions &#8211 and the court restricted each defendant to two witnesses,&#8221 noted the news release.

In addition, the Libyan judicial system does not allow for a full appeal but only cassation &#8211 a review focused on points of law only.

&#8220[We urge] the Court of Cassation to take into full account the due process violations identified in the report and provide effective remedies, pending the adoption of reforms needed to bring Libyan trials into full

compliance with international standards,&#8221 the two UN entities noted.

Among other specific recommendations, the report also called for a review of the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure to ensure all crimes are clearly defined, access to lawyers during interrogation is guaranteed and other fair trial safeguards are strengthened.

The report also said the Libyan authorities should also ensure the surrender of Saif al-Islam Gaddafi to the International Criminal Court (ICC), in compliance with Libya's international obligations.

Multilingual education is 'absolutely essential,' UNESCO chief says on Mother Language Day

21 February 2017 – Learning languages is a promise of peace, innovation and creativity, and will contribute to the achievement of global development goals, the head of the United Nations agency for culture and education has said, marking International Mother Language Day.

&#8220There can be no authentic dialogue or effective international cooperation without respect for linguistic diversity, which opens up true understanding of every culture,&#8221 said UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Director-General Irina Bokova in her message on the Day.

&#8220Access to the diversity of languages can awaken the curiosity and mutual understanding of peoples. That is why learning languages is at one and the same time a promise of peace, of innovation and of creativity,&#8221 she stated.

This year, the International Day, observed annually on 21 February, is devoted to multilingual education.

Ms. Bokova said the Day is an opportunity to mobilize for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular Goal 4, to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

&#8220Education and information in the mother language is absolutely essential to improving learning and developing confidence and self-esteem, which are among the most powerful engines of development,&#8221 she said.

As such, she appealed for the potential of multilingual education to be acknowledged everywhere, in education and administrative systems, in cultural expressions and the media, cyberspace and trade.

International Mother Language Day was proclaimed by UNESCO's General Conference in November 1999, and it has been observed every year since February 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.