

Applications now open for the Welsh Enterprise Zone Business Rates Scheme

The scheme focuses on small and medium sized enterprises that are demonstrating business growth, new starts or businesses that are increasing the size of their full time workforce.

Consideration will also be given to other business activity related to sectors, increased productivity and innovation/R&D.

Applications for the 2016/17 financial year can be made until **Friday, 31st March 2017**.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

“This latest round of the Enterprise Zone Rates Scheme has the potential to make a real difference to businesses, helping to significantly cut their rates bills which in turn can improve cash flow and enable companies to make investments in their growing businesses.

“We first launched the scheme in 2012 and between 2012 -2016 around £9million has been offered to more than 200 eligible businesses located in seven of our Enterprise Zones, with the offer extended to Port Talbot Waterfront Enterprise Zone following its designation last year.”

For more information about the Scheme, businesses can ring the Business Wales helpline on freephone 03000 6 03000 or contact the EZBRS team at EZBRS@wales.gsi.gov.uk for an application form.

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.

“Holding perpetrators responsible for violations is vitally important but accountability should be the result of due process and a fair trial,” 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.

“This 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.”

Of the 37 members of the former regime under trial including Colonel Muammar Gaddafi’s son Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, former intelligence chief Abdullah al-Senussi, and former Prime Minister Al-Baghdadi al-Mahmudi 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.

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

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

“[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,” 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.

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

“Access 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,” 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.

“Education 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,” 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.

Press release: Record exports support Global Britain drive

Global sales of the UK's food and drink have hit the £20 billion mark for the first time, Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom will announce today.

New figures reveal exports grew by nearly 10 per cent in 2016, with food and drink sales to the USA – one of Britain's biggest markets – up 12 per cent. China is quickly becoming one of our fastest growing markets, with the export value of pork skyrocketing to £43 million, an increase of over 70 per cent.

Alongside these global heavy-hitters, newer markets also saw record growth last year – exports to Malaysia grew by a whopping 143 per cent, while India emerged as one of our priority markets thanks to growing demand for Scotch whisky.

The figures reveal exports show no sign of slowing following the decision to leave the EU, and come as the Environment Secretary vows to ramp up the focus on international trade.

With only one in five food producers currently exporting, a dedicated Government team has turned its attention to ensuring UK companies have the skills, knowledge and confidence to tap into new international markets and take advantage of the global demand for British food and drink.

Speaking ahead of the NFU Conference today, Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

It's great to see the global appetite for British food and drink continues to grow – thanks to our well-established reputation for taste, quality and high animal health and welfare standards.

As we prepare to leave the EU, there has never been a better time to become more outward looking – developing new trading relationships and establishing our place as a truly Global Britain.

But the food and drink industry cannot do this alone – we need to give them the skills, knowledge and contacts to make the most of the opportunities ahead.

I want to see more companies taking advantage of these opportunities, which is why we're expanding our team of trade

experts to support UK businesses, encouraging them to take the leap and share their quality produce with the world.

As well as opening up new markets around the globe, the Government will continue its focus on taking advantage of European markets – with exports of salmon to France growing by 31 per cent and all food and drink exports to Germany up by 12 per cent.

France and Germany are among the priority markets identified in the [UK International Action Plan for Food and Drink](#) launched last October.

Through this plan, the Government is focusing on forging stronger links with key markets including USA and Canada, China and India to generate an extra £2.9 billion in exports over the next five years.

Food and Drink Federation Director General Ian Wright CBE said:

Exports of food and drink reached record levels last year and we're committed to building on this success going forward.

We'll continue to work closely with Government to help existing and new food and drink exporters take advantage of the growing international demand for our produce.

Ministers are also continuing to fly the flag for British food abroad – the Environment Secretary visited China in November last year, while Food Minister George Eustice will be visiting the UAE and Kuwait next week to support nearly 100 UK firms exhibiting at Gulfood and agree market access for lamb.

Through the Government's [Food is GREAT](#) campaign Defra will continue its work to drive exports and increase global demand for the UK's top quality food and drink.

[Press release: Jo Johnson demands tough penalties on student plagiarism](#)

Universities Minister Jo Johnson is today (Tuesday 21 February) calling on university and student bodies to do more to deal with the spread of 'essay mills' – websites which provide custom written essays for students to submit as part of their degree.

The Universities Minister has asked for guidance aimed at universities and information for students to help combat the use of these websites, as well as

other forms of plagiarism. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has also been tasked to take action against the online advertising of these services and to work with international agencies to deal with this problem.

The Minister is calling for the guidance to include tough new penalties for those who make use of essay mills websites, as well as the need to educate students about the potentially significant negative impacts on their future career if they are caught cheating.

Universities Minister Jo Johnson said:

“This form of cheating is unacceptable and every university should have strong policies and sanctions in place to detect and deal with it.

“Essay mill websites threaten to undermine the high quality reputation of a UK degree so it is vital that the sector works together to address this in a consistent and robust way.”

The spread of essay mill websites was uncovered in a QAA report, commissioned by the government, which was published last year. It found that the websites often advertise their services to students for a fee and many promote “plagiarism-free guarantees”, or essays tested against plagiarism detection software.

Further work by QAA has confirmed that there are now over 100 essay mills websites currently in operation. Prices charged by these sites vary depending on the complexity of essay and tightness of deadline. They can range from a couple of hundred pounds for a single essay to as high as £6,750 for a PhD dissertation.

Ian Kimber, QAA’s Director of Universities, Quality Enhancement and Standards said:

“Essay mills are a major challenge for universities and colleges because, unlike other forms of cheating, the practice is notoriously difficult to detect. We look forward to continuing our work with the government and sector colleagues in addressing an issue potentially damaging to students and the reputation of UK higher education.”

The new sector guidance and student information is expected to be made available for the beginning of the 2017/18 teaching year.

Following a request by the government to investigate the use of essay mills in the UK, the QAA published a report on this issue in August 2016 titled ‘Plagiarism in Higher Education – Custom essay writing services: an exploration and next steps for the UK higher education sector’. This report confirmed that essays mills are a “growing threat to UK higher education”.

Sector guidance on plagiarism has not been updated for some time. It is currently left to individual institutions to develop their own plagiarism policies in accordance with the requirements and indicators of sound practice set out in the [UK Quality Code](#).