

Government *WORLD*TM

Winter 2013/14 Edition



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welters organisation
P.O. Box 159 Carlisle, Great Britain CA2 5BG
Office: 08702 416 422
Fax: 01228 674 959
E-mail: office@government-world.com

Submissions should be sent to **Government WORLD**,
PO Box 159, Carlisle, CA2 5BG
Tel: 08702 416 422 Fax: 01228 674 959
Email: submissions@government-world.com

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Cover picture
River mismanagement

National News Headlines December 2013

1st December

- Scotland mourns its dead as inquest starts into cause of helicopter disaster
- Shock four-country poll reveals the widening gulf between UK and EU
- Osborne gives £1,000 to all home-buyers

2nd December

- Get ready for polar plunge
- Ninth body recovered in crash pub
- London has 2,700 bankers earning a million

3rd December

- 90Mph Arctic storm on way
- I can't live on £500 a week benefits ...says single mum of eight
- China: we'll help Britain build HS2

4th December

- Killer winter storms for next 30 years
- Fuel prices result in people driving less
- Terror threat to London as teenagers join war in Syria

5th December

- In your 20s? You may have to wait 50 years for a pension
- Storm brings wind and rail shutdown
- Coastal flood danger front tidal surges

6th December

- Mandela dead
- 142Mph storm wreaks havoc
- Pensions up and house prices soar



National News Headlines December 2013

7th December

- Worst storm for 60 years
- Damage assessed amid flood clean up
- Half of GPs too slow in spotting cancer

8th December

- Flood victims in rat terror
- MPs face fury as they get 11% rise
- Police probe football fix claims

9th December

- Storms on way at christmas
- Now former M&S boss backs migrants' right to jobs we don't want
- The poorest pay the price for austerity

10th December

- Comic Relief invested in arms trade
- 180Mph killer Christmas winds
- Mandela memorial forces old foes together

11th December

- Britain facing a £ 438bn state pension timebomb
- A day to remember: world leaders unite for Mandela
- Ofsted: Bad behaviour is holding back our schools

12th December

- £ 55bn fraud and unpaid tax scandal costs every UK family £ 3,000 a year
- Quarter of incapacity claimants fit for work
- Lloyds fined £28m for 'fleecing' customers



National News Headlines December 2013

13th December

- Freak storm to batter Britain
- National Health Shambles
- HS2 project essential to UK, say MPs

14th December

- Cameron: Prisoners damn well shouldn't get the right to vote
- 12-hour wait times in A&E
- New runway 'would wipe millions off house prices'

15th December

- School citizenship pack 'spreads Tory propaganda'
- 'Huge surge' in dumping of toxic 'e-waste'
- Spy plane clue to Maddie mystery

16th December

- Why are we giving China £27m in aid?
- Jobless face benefit cap if they have a third baby
- MPs blast cronyism at the BBC

17th December

- Clegg in clash with coalition over bid to cut EU immigration
- Poorer than your parents
- 100MPH storms for Xmas Day

18th December

- House prices hit new record
- Fracking firms are invited to drill under almost half of Britain
- Snowden 'willing' to investigate US spying



National News Headlines December 2013

19th December

- Twelve days of Christmas storms
- Most councils are planning to build on the green belt
- Fracking firms could drill beneath your home – and not even tell you

20th December

- Xmas escape hit by killer storm
- Poll shows Yes campaign is closing gap in race for votes
- Four-year low in jobless raises recovery hopes

21st December

- Hospitals miss A&E targets
- First class! Newsagent takes on Royal Mail with next-day delivery for 30p
- Palestinian militant link to Lockerbie

22nd December

- Tory Right demands that Cameron vows to slash top tax rate
- Deadly 100mph storm chaos
- Councils make record £ 600m from parking

23rd December

- Coalition at war over migrants
- Wind and rain hit Christmas travel
- Artificial heart 'just a pump' like real one

24th December

- More vicious storms on way
- Soaked shoppers splash out £ 2.6m a minute in Manic Monday panic
- £5,000 season tickets for Kent rail commuters



National News Headlines December 2013

26th December

- Floods until the new year
- Lifeline to small firms under bank lending shake-up
- Storms leave 800 Scots homes with no power for Christmas

27th December

- Migrant numbers at crisis point
- Punch-ups at Boxing Day sales
- Fury with MPs is main reason for not voting

28th December

- UK storm: No power No let-up
- Workshy told scrounging no longer option
- Children's tsar wants smacking to be illegal

29th December

- Britons fear being worse off in 2014
- Euro court has too much power and must be curbed says top judge
- Mortgage rise will plunge a million into 'perilous debt'

30th December

- Month of storms to batter Britain
- Michael Schumacher left critically ill after ski crash
- Power companies 'let customers down'

31st December

- True toll of 24-hour drinking
- Firms predict 40,000 jobs will be created next year
- Referendum in 2014 is opportunity of a lifetime, says Salmond



National News Headlines January 2014

1st January

- Benefits Britain here we come!
- UK recovery set to drive up pensions
- Millions across UK welcome New Year

2nd January

- Interest rates may rise this year
- Power firms pull plug on cheaper bills
- Is this the end of 1st class rail?

3rd January

- Deadly floods to cause chaos for weeks
- Patients should pay £ 10 to visit A& E, say GPs
- Fury at rail fares hikes

4th January

- NHS spending on consultants rises three-fold in just one year
- UK braced for more stormy weather
- Sir Ming says politicians of Cameron and Clegg's age 'too young'

5th January

- Labour will block cheap foreign staff loophole
- Half of defecting Tory voters would go to Ukip – poll
- Flooding risk remains for parts of UK

6th January

- Migrants face benefits ban
- Turmoil over oap benefits
- Osborne: Recovery won't be safe unless we make more cuts



National News Headlines January 2014

7th January

- Osborne: I'll slash £ 12bn off welfare
- 80% want cut in immigration
- Buy less foreign food minister

8th January

- Kent police arrest suspects from 100 countries in a year
- Rain brings fresh flooding fears
- Boris calls for two-year benefit ban on migrants

9th January

- Siberian snow to hit Britain
- Tax breaks for firms could soften blow of minimum wage rise
- Police did alter crime figures, says Met chief

10th January

- 'Let's create United States of Europe'
- UK recovery 'will be the best in the world'
- Thousands due bedroom tax refunds after blunder by DWP

11th January

- 'Labour's open door has kept wages low'
- Two new cities in secret Tory plan
- Benefits chaos 'will spark new housing crisis'

12th January

- MP reveals 'spy in the pocket' phones track your every move
- Defiant Brussels slaps down British threats to rewrite immigration rules
- Keeping tuition fees 'breaks EU law'



National News Headlines January 2014

13th January

- Ten- minute test for alzheimer's
- Another week of rain and storms to sweep in
- Migrants facing ban on benefits

14th January

- Tougher new test to get a home loan
- UK inflation rate falls to 2%
- WW1 soldier diaries published online

15th January

- Equal pay deal could force NEC sale
- BT sues health service over £110m computer contract
- Bin size shrinking as councils cut costs

16th January

- Official: we can't trust crime figures
- Military cuts 'limit UK world role'
- Academics pour scorn on independence timetable

17th January

- House prices to soar £ 25,000
- One in four lone parents depends solely on welfare
- Osborne: We can afford to raise minimum wage

18th January

- Miliband vow wipes £1bn off taxpayer bank shares
- Wettest ever winter goes on
- Clegg tells PM: Come clean on new cities



National News Headlines January 2014

19th January

- MPs tell Cameron to fight 'plague' of failing marriages
- Tories mourn Thatcher confidant Lord McAlpine
- Revealed: how Savile abused up to 1,000 on BBC premises

20th January

- MPs tell Cameron to fight 'plague' of failing marriages
- Tories mourn Thatcher confidant Lord McAlpine
- Revealed: how Savile abused up to 1,000 on BBC premises

21st January

- Sunshine cuts blood pressure
- Boost for Osborne as IMF calls UK economy strongest in the West
- Hundreds of benefit claimants are fined each day

22nd January

- High energy bills? Your home is too draughty
- Britain braced for more floods
- Generation of men still living with parents

23rd January

- UK unemployment rate drops to 7.1%
- Scottish police chiefs win £10,000-a-year pay rises
- Brrrrritain is all set to freeze

24rd January

- Judge's fury as refugee abuses benefits system
- 48 Albanians hide in lorry
- At last! Wages rise faster than prices



25th January

- 80 mph gales to batter Britain
- Balls vows budget surplus by 2020
- Claims thousands of pounds not distributed to charities

26th January

- Labour's grasping tax rate rise will damage recovery
- Shame of neglect on wards
- Extremist religion at root of 21st-century wars – Blair

27th January

- Tories will hold EU referendum, promises Hague
- Labour's civil war over 50p tax plan
- UK regions hit by brain drain

28th January

- Diabetes cure within reach
- I share frustration on curbing EU migrants Cameron tells rebels
- Labour poll lead falls to lowest in two years

29th January

- Lords back a ban on smoking in cars carrying children
- Vicious 48- hour storm on way
- Economy grows at its fastest pace since 2007 crash

30th January

- Bank warning to Scots over keeping pound
- Britain should have kept out of first world war
- Military flood plan meeting underway

31st January

- The wettest January since records began
- A fifth on dole have criminal records
- New houses boom helps to build the recovery



National News Headlines February 2014

1st February

- Storms to last until Spring
- Schools face surprise inspections if parents go online to complain
- Salmond stands firm on tax and spending powers

2nd February

- Toxic water adds to flood misery
- Angry Lib Dems accuse Gove of bid to politicise education
- The secret dossier on immigrant crime

3rd February

- Benefits blitz on scroungers
- We're fed up with war, says minister
- Landowners in legal challenge to fracking

4th February

- All pensioners will get bigger payouts
- Investigation reveals plight of carers forced into
- Brits who fight in Syria face life

5th February

- Worst storm of year on the way
- Decade of house price rises ahead
- Ukip MEP calls for Muslim code of conduct

6th February

- Cut top rate of tax? Over my dead body says leading Lib Dem
- UK braced for more rain after storms
- Cable: Yes vote will force RBS to London



National News Headlines February 2014

7th February

- Stay with UK, Cameron tells Scotland
- Corrie ken: my year of hell
- Flee flood homes... or you drown'

8th February

- Spend our foreign aid on British victims of flooding
- Corrie ken: my year of hell
- Southern UK set for gales and rain

9th February

- EU migrants in £ 200k child benefit scandal
- Corrie ken: my year of hell
- Southern UK set for gales and rain

10th February

- GHOULS TAUNT TRAGIC FLOOD VICTIMS Gawping looters scupper rescue
- Scots more liberal about immigration impact than rest of UK
- Prince makes plea in support of wildlife

11th February

- Now thousands facing flood misery
- MPs vote to ban smoking in cars carrying children
- Blame homeowners says flood supremo

12th February

- Now thousands facing flood misery
- MPs vote to ban smoking in cars carrying children
- Blame homeowners says flood supremo



National News Headlines February 2014

13th February

- MPS want more overseas aid distributed as loans
- SGPS warn of crisis in public confidence over NHS database
- Power cuts continue after storms

14th February

- Stormy weather returns to sodden UK
- Pension system 'is not working'
- Letter-bombs shocker at 7 army offices

15th February

- Storm misery to end...at last
- 2,000 Nhs patients' records are lost every day
- Even EU chief says migrants put strain on public services

16th February

- Storm misery to end...at last
- Miliband's stark warning: climate change an issue of national security
- New Bafta fellow Dame Helen attacks rise of TV violence against women

17th February

- 70% Say we must ban new migrants
- 200 Women troops sent home for being pregnant
- I can't control UK's soaring house prices says Carney

18th February

- UK inflation fell to 1.9% last month
- Stop blaming EU for your migrant problems
- Miliband goes to war on London housing



National News Headlines February 2014

19th February

- House prices soar by £ 17,000
- Inflation falls to a 4- year low
- Dog kills SIX day old baby

20th February

- Romanians were pouring here even before ban ended
- Teen 'lured to his death on internet'
- Osborne: Recovery is not yet secure

21st February

- Statins key to living longer
- '70 dead' as Ukraine revolt escalates
- Flood damage 'was preventable'

22nd February

- Boost for Yes camp as trade union to back independence
- Academics warn that sectarianism goes beyond football
- Fears of Kiev bloodbath as more die in street clashes

23rd February

- Millions to get energy payout
- Ukraine's president flees Kiev as opposition takes control
- Cameron says the Union is crucial for North Sea oil

24th February

- New pensions crisis on way for millions
- EU red tape is costing UK firms £ 6bn a year
- After 100 years, NI to be renamed Earnings Tax



National News Headlines February 2014

25th February

- Let's stick together PM urges Scotland
- BBC under attack for failing to report on paedophilia scandal
- Academy chain stripped of 10 schools

26th February

- EU chief 's promise to rebuild Ukraine
- Sizzling spring heatwave is on the way
- Currency experts issue warning over SNP plan to keep pound

27th February

- Now Britain's on snow alert
- House prices to rise 7 per cent this year
- Alarm at surge in number of patients blocking NHS beds

28th February

- SCANDAL: Migrant invasion out of control
- Energy firms told to hand back £400m
- Northern Lights illuminate the UK



Apparently Illusive Public Funds

'Black hole' mystery for planned tourist development

Barnabas and Rock UK Adventure Centres Ltd, the associated Christian charity operations are in the process of developing a scheme to connect the Scottish Borders village of Newcastleton to neighbouring Whithaugh where its holiday park is situated.

Currently, the Liddle Water separates the two areas but the apparent objective is to make it easier for visitors and local people to access the 7Stanes mountain biking trails incorporating the adventure centre as well as boosting visitor numbers to the village and the forest beyond.

The scheme is said to be costing in the region of £300,000 with £222,127 being funded by the Scottish Rural Development Fund but the true extent of costs and development proposals remain a mystery in terms of coordinated business plan, function responsibility and assessment.

Many concerns remain unanswered in respect of health and safety and risk assessment measures and not least environmental management

It is likely that a toxic mix of non-compatible potential users to the wide ranging facility and surrounding area are likely to exemplify a thought process sign off which is seriously short of appropriate judgements.

The nature of the landscape and flow of the river has already, and will continue to be effected, and flood and climate implications add to the burden of issues which should have been more carefully appraised. The project is apparently due for completion in April with numerous cycling activities, events and a new trail section operational amidst local programmes for on and off road motor cycling and rally car events.

When this is all embraced, together with convoys of

timber wagons operating afforestation extraction, horse riders, ordinary walkers and dog walkers, and the most important existing business and agricultural local resident activity. It appears that mayhem is the most likely end result. There is an urgent need for the various responsible persons and organisations to take stock and think this project through more carefully, especially when considering the high percentage of management of other people's money that is involved.

An amazing opportunity has been missed in being able to conceive the design of a simple and beautiful bridge structure whereas in reality, an architectural blight on the beauty of the small historic borders town has come to pass, although it does appear that the bridge now in place is being re-used following installation at other locations and has been modified for its current purpose. It may be that part of the plan is to replace this subsequently should it survive the rigours of a few Liddesdale Winters.



A contractor works perilously above a large section of bank which slipped into the river during path installation works



The swollen river further erodes the bank and flooding is more common



Contractors lower the 'footbridge' in place, connecting Newcastleton to Whithaugh

Mobiles should be banned from class after thousands of incidents revealed

Pupils should be forced to hand over their mobiles before entering the classroom, after councils recorded thousands of incidents of children being disciplined in relation to phone use.

Research by the Scottish Conservatives has shown there were more than 2,000 instances of youngsters being disciplined for using phones in school over the past three years.

The true figure is likely to be significantly higher, with many local authorities failing to collect information on the issue.

The Scottish Conservatives have now called on pupils to be forced to give up their devices before going into class.

They would then receive them back at break time and before going home.

The party said this would be a

more proportionate response rather than an outright ban, adding it would go some way to addressing cheating in the classroom, unnecessary distractions and the issue of cyber bullying.

A Freedom of Information request has revealed pupils were punished on 2,175 occasions since 2010/11, based on the responses from a third of Scottish Councils.

Although there were a handful of exclusions and suspensions, the bulk of cases were dealt with by more moderate measures such as formal warnings of punishment exercises.

In one case, in the Western Isles, a pupil was disciplined for "using a mobile phone inappropriately to take a photograph of an incident between two pupils".

It was revealed earlier this year that more than 100 pupils had their exam results scrapped

after being caught cheating with a mobile phone.

Local authorities have also been urged to improve the way they collect data in relation to mobile phone use by children.

Scottish Conservative education spokeswoman Mary Scanlon MSP said: "In the classroom, the priority for everyone has to be the lesson in hand.

"It is simply too easy for a pupils to access a mobile phone in their pocket, distracting themselves and others in the process.

"This is something parents and teachers want to see us get tough on – it should very much be the norm that mobile phones are handed over at the classroom door.

"An outright ban on phones from school premises would be excessive, particularly as children may need to contact parents at home time.

"But we have to learn to use technology responsibly.

"It can be a great learning tool, but it can also be hugely damaging.

"Children must learn to use phones in the right way, not view them as a permanent commodity they cannot live without.

"The figures here are only the tip of the iceberg, and given mobile phones are becoming more and more commonplace, I would urge councils to try and improve the way they monitor phone use in the classroom."

Below is a breakdown of councils who do collect information in relation to incidents involving mobile phones in the classroom. The figures cover the years 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13:

- Argyll and Bute – 1
- Borders – 238
- East Lothian – 4
- Fife – 1,159
- Inverclyde – 0
- Midlothian – 4
- Orkney – 7
- Perth and Kinross – 298
- Renfrewshire – 338
- Shetland – 1
- West Lothian – 87
- Western Isles – 38
- Total – 2,175

Joining Organ Donor Register can save lives

More people are being encouraged to join the Organ Donor Register (ODR) in Northern Ireland. Sadly there are still not enough organs available for people needing transplants. Have you considered signing up to the register? You can join online.

Potential organ donors

Recent research by the Public Health Agency (PHA) revealed that only 31 per cent of people in Northern Ireland are registered as potential organ donors. But general support for the concept of organ donation for transplantation is extremely high (84 per cent), and the majority of respondents would take an organ if they needed one.

When asked about the issue of consent, 78 per cent said they should discuss their wishes with their loved ones, yet only 38 per cent said that they have done this.

Gift of life

Organ donation really is the gift of life. The generosity of donors and their families enhances or saves the lives of recipients across Northern Ireland. It is important that you discuss your wishes with the people closest to you so that, if the time ever comes, they will find it easier to carry out your wishes regarding donating your organs.

One organ donor can help up to nine different people.

Around 200 people in

Northern Ireland are currently awaiting organ donations.

You can find out more at the pages below:

If you want to join the ODR by phone or text, contact:

- phone: 0300 123 23 23
- text: SAVE to 84118

You can also join the register when you are:

- registering for a driving licence
- applying for a Boots Advantage Card
- registering at a GP surgery
- registering for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

Anyone can register on the ODR. Age isn't a barrier to being an organ or tissue donor, and neither are most medical conditions. People in their 70s and 80s have become donors and saved many lives.

UKIP celebrates record year of growth

2013 saw record growth in the number of people joining UKIP. Party membership started 2013 at around 19,500 but the party is finishing the year with over 32,500 members.

UKIP Chairman Steve Crowther said: "The narrative in Westminster seems to be that falling party membership is inevitable. Well in UKIP's case the opposite is true; our membership is growing faster than ever.

"In May alone, the month that the Council elections were held, UKIP membership went up by 2,500. We will now aim to continue that momentum and growth as we head into next year's European Elections and the 2015 General Election as well."

UKIP Leader Nigel Farage said: "One of the most exciting aspects of UKIP is that we are helping to re-engage many people who had given up on politics altogether.

"Many of our members are those who have never been a member of any political party before but who see that it is UKIP who is challenging the establishment on issues such as open door immigration, grammar schools and green taxes."

Plan to publish historical police records announced

Proposals for making historical police records public were announced today by the Home Office following a recommendation by the Hillsborough Independent Panel.

A working group will now be set up to consider how records can be made more accessible and transparent.

One option would be to add English and Welsh police forces to the Public Records Act 1958, bringing them in line with central government departments.

Police forces would then be required to review 30-year-old records and transfer those which meet pre-determined criteria to an archive where members of the public can view them.

They would be able to retain some records, such as crime scene evidence, for longer periods if they could show they were needed for current or future work.

This idea was recommended by the Hillsborough Independent Panel in their report into the 1989 disaster.

The panel highlighted that police records which would not normally have been accessible were made available to them on an exceptional basis.

Policing Minister Damian Green said:

The work of the Hillsborough Independent Panel showed how hugely

significant information can be found in historical police records and we should learn from their experience.

It makes sense to consider how to bring the police in line with other public bodies, including the government, which already makes records accessible after a certain period of time.

The government is determined to ensure the work of the police is as transparent as possible and this working group will explore how this might affect police records.

The working group will report back to the Home Office with a clear proposal and action plan by the end of June 2014.

Shale gas health review by Public Health England

In response to the release of the draft Public Health England Review of the 'Potential public health impacts of exposures to chemical and radioactive pollutants as a result of shale gas' on Thursday 31 October;

Energy Minister Michael Fallon welcomed the report's findings saying:

"I welcome this report which shows that the potential risk to public health from shale gas production in the UK is low.

"The UK has the most robust regulatory regime in the world for shale gas and companies will only be granted permission to frack for shale if their operations are safe.

"Public safety and health is paramount and Government will continue to work with industry to ensure the stringent safety guidelines are upheld as they explore the great potential for shale."

The Marriage of a Lion-tamer and a Poet

Scottish records of births from 1913, marriages from 1938 and deaths from 1963 will go online for the first time on 1 Jan 2014.

Almost 222,000 images of birth, marriage and death records will be made available to family history researchers, including those of well-known people and unusual stories.

There were 38,716 marriages in 1938, including that between German circus performer and lion tamer Alfred Kaden, then 35, and Vera Hüsing (née Lüdtke), 25, the poet daughter of a German landowner. At the time a Glasgow newspaper described Hüsing as “vivacious, flaxen-haired and handsome” and said she had “won distinction by her poems and songs.”

The records show that in 1938, the average age for women to be married was 26.7 and for men was 29.7.

In 2012, the average age for women was 34.8 and for men was 37.2, and there were 30,534 marriages.

In 1913 the population was 4.73 million and there were 120,516 births. By contrast, in 2012 there were 58,027 births and a total population of 5.31 million people.

The records also show the change in babies names over the past century. In 1913 only three baby girls were named Sophie, whereas 580 girls were registered with the name in 2012. Likewise, while in 1913 only three boys were called Jack, over 500 boys were named Jack in 2012. In 1913, the most popular names for baby girls were Mary, Annie and Agnes, and John, James, Robert and William for boys.

The newly-released images include entries for 65,521 deaths in 1963, which compares to 54,937 in 2012. The life expectancy of Scots

has risen during the last 50 years, as the growing number of growing number of centenarians shows. In 1963, only 28 people died at or over the age of 100, but in 2012 the equivalent figure was 389, or almost 14 times as many people, and well ahead of the increase in Scotland's population.

Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs Fiona Hyslop said: "These new images, and the stories they tell about Scotland's history, demonstrate the rich variety of information we have in our records.

"The new images of records being made available to the public from tomorrow (1st JANUARY 2014) represent a new chapter of Scotland's story now available to the public. I'd encourage anyone who is interested in finding out more about their local history or family background to have a look at the wealth of records now available as part

of our wonderful online resources."

Tim Ellis, Registrar General and Keeper of the Records of Scotland, said:

"The records that National Records of Scotland holds are crammed full of fascinating stories about Scotland's people and history, and I know that people will find the latest additions to our online resources very useful for family history and other research. If someone out there recognises the story of the lion-tamer and the poet, we would be delighted to learn what became of them."

Annelies van den Belt, Chief Executive of DC Thomson Family History, who enable the ScotlandsPeople website for National Records of Scotland, said: "We always enjoy the colourful personal stories that are revealed when the images for the statutory births, marriages and deaths records are added to the ScotlandsPeople website. In particular, we loved the story about the German poetess who married a lion tamer in Glasgow in January 1938.

"We also enjoyed finding out about the society weddings that took place the same year. We think many other fascinating stories will emerge when people start viewing these records."

FM praises storms response in Scotland



Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond

First Minister Alex Salmond has praised emergency efforts to get the lights back on in tens of thousands of Scottish homes following power cuts caused by storms over the festive period.

More than a thousand energy workers – including engineers, linesmen, tree cutters and call centre staff – have been working round the clock to restore power to more than 26,500 Scottish households cut off

during three separate bouts of severe weather since December 19, 2013.

It is hoped that almost 300 Scottish Power customers in Dumfries and Galloway who lost power on Friday will be reconnected today.

Mr Salmond said: “I would like to thank all of the staff who have given up time with their families this festive season to keep the lights on across Scotland. Their relentless efforts during these winter storms to get so many people reconnected so quickly deserve recognition and appreciation.

“Although not everyone is back on supply, I am hopeful this will happen soon and I understand Scottish Power is deploying generators until permanent repairs can be made

as well as working with local responders where necessary.

“Wet and windy weather is not unusual for this time of the year and the Scottish Government’s Resilience committee will continue to closely monitor conditions over the coming days and weeks.”



Almost a week after Somerset County Council declared the flooding a major incident, the Government has finally decided to respond

Maria Eagle MP, Labour’s Shadow Environment Secretary, responding to the Prime Minister’s decision finally to call on the army to help the flood-stricken residents of Somerset, said:

“Almost a week after Somerset County Council declared the flooding a major incident, the Government has finally decided to respond. Just days after the Environment Secretary announced that he wanted to see a concrete plan presented to him in six weeks, David Cameron has had enough of Owen Paterson’s dithering and called in the Army.

“This comes after it was revealed that Owen Paterson chose to ignore a report which clearly warned a year ago that the lack of river maintenance in regions such as Somerset would pose a serious risk of flooding. It is further evidence of the Environment Secretary’s failure to take flooding seriously.”

Deep sea secrets uncovered

Four secretive sea creatures previously unknown to science have been discovered in deep ocean waters hundreds of miles off the north west coast of Scotland.

Marine Scotland trawl surveys off the continental shelf in the north Atlantic have uncovered a brand new species of large sea snail, two kinds of clams and a marine worm.

International experts have now confirmed that they are completely new to science, meaning the mysterious molluscs have managed to avoid detection during decades of underwater research around the Rockall plateau.

The finds are incredibly unusual and the discovery of the clams and worm at a single site is potentially hugely significant as

it could indicate the presence of a cold seep, where hydrocarbons are released from the sea bed. If confirmed, it would be the first cold seep to be discovered in the vicinity of Rockall.

Environment Secretary Richard Lochhead said: "Our oceans are often called Earth's final frontier and these new species prove just how much we still have to learn about this rich marine habitat. Scottish waters cover an area around five times bigger than our land mass and are miles deep in places, and these hidden gems offer a fascinating glimpse of the treasures that still await discovery under the waves.

"While understanding more about these great depths is clearly very challenging, we know that Scotland's seas are home to a diverse range

of precious sea life and it is our responsibility to protect this fragile environment. The area where these species were found is not currently fished and the confirmation of a cold seep is likely to result in the region being closed to bottom contact fishing."

Jim Drewery from Marine Scotland Science, who oversaw the research on the deep water invertebrates, said:

"The discovery of these new species is absolutely incredible, especially when you consider that the sea snail measures a relatively large 10 cm yet has gone undetected for decades. Its capture on these surveys could be due to the new techniques we are now employing at Marine Scotland Science in our research on the deep sea floor.

"The project we were

undertaking was designed to provide advice that would help balance both commercial fishing and conservation interests in the Rockall area. The potential cold seep and its dependant community of marine life is a great find as it is just the sort of habitat we were hoping to pick up on these surveys.

"I am particularly excited by the discovery of the marine worm *Antonbrunnia*, the first of its kind to be found in the entire Atlantic. It was actually discovered by international bivalve expert Dr Graham Oliver inside one of the clams he was confirming as a new species at his laboratory at the National Museum of Wales. We would like to thank Dr Oliver and the Belgian conchologist Koen Faussen for their tremendous contribution to this research

"Marine Scotland Science has been able to narrow down the location of the potential cold seep to a small area 260 miles west of the Hebrides in the Rockall-Hatton basin. Further research is now needed, which would involve going down to take a look at the ocean floor three quarters of a mile underwater."

Seasonal madness as Brussels looks to ban cinnamon in Danish pastries



UKIP Deputy Leader Paul Nuttall MEP.

EU guidelines which mean Danish pastries are under threat are "more Eurocratic madness" according to UKIP Deputy Leader Paul Nuttall MEP.

Denmark's food safety agency plans to implement EU regulations to limit the amount of coumarin, which is a naturally occurring toxic chemical found in cassia, the most common type

of cinnamon used in the pastries.

"If they are going to do so, it is highly likely that the UK - which not only implements but gold-plates the rules and regulations emanating from Brussels - will follow suit," said Mr Nuttall.

The EU has laid down guidelines for the maximum content of coumarin in foodstuffs – 50mg per kg of dough in traditional or seasonal foods that are only consumed occasionally, and 15mg per kg of dough in what it terms as everyday fine baked goods.

For member states which do not class Danish pastries as traditional or seasonal foodstuffs it means an effective ban.

"The EU is going nuts. First it was banning olive oil in bowls, then regulating size of toilet flushes and now engineering an effective ban on cinnamon on Danish pastries," said Mr Nuttall.

"An average person would have to eat so many Danish pastries in order to be effected, they would certainly die of obesity before being hurt by a low level of cinnamon.

"Most things are fine in moderation; alcohol being a good example and it should be for people themselves not the EU bureaucrats to decide how much they consume.

"We don't need the nanny state, or the dictatorial political union that is the

EU to tell us what do and certainly not how many Danish pastries we should eat.

"At this time of year, we don't need silly EU regulations on our plate. Personally I would much prefer a Danish pastry.

"As far as I am aware there are no proven cases of death by a Danish pastry cinnamon overdose, so let's be realistic and allow people a pleasure they enjoy, rather than a regulation they don't need," he said.



Pregnant women advised to avoid animals that are giving birth

Pregnant women who come into close contact with sheep during lambing or other farm animals that are giving birth may risk their own health, and that of their unborn child, from infections that such animals can carry.

Chief Veterinary Officer Professor Christianne Glossop said: "Farmers have a responsibility to minimise the risks to pregnant women and to keep them away from their sheep. This includes members of their family, the public and professional staff visiting farms.

"Although the number of human pregnancies affected by contact with an infected animal is extremely small, it is important that pregnant women are aware of the potential risks and take appropriate precautions."

The risks are not only associated with sheep, or confined to the spring (when the majority of lambs are born). Cattle and goats that have recently given birth can also carry similar infections.

To avoid the possible risk of infection, pregnant women should:

- not help ewes to lamb, or provide assistance with a cow that is calving or a nanny goat that is kidding;
- avoid contact with aborted or new-born lambs, calves or kids or with the afterbirth, birthing fluids or materials (e.g. bedding) contaminated by such birth products;
- avoid handling (including washing) clothing, boots or any materials that may have come into

contact with animals that have recently given birth, their young or afterbirths. Potentially contaminated clothing will be safe to handle after being washed on a hot cycle;

- ensure contacts or partners who have attended lambing ewes or other animals giving birth take appropriate health and hygiene precautions, including the wearing of personal protective equipment and clothing and adequate washing to remove any potential contamination.

Pregnant women should seek medical advice if they experience fever or influenza-like symptoms, or if concerned that they could have acquired infection from a farm environment.

David Cameron showed he just doesn't care about the coalfields

Michael Dugher MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for the Cabinet Office, responding to David Cameron failing to support Labour's Justice for the Coalfields campaign, said:

"David Cameron showed he just doesn't care about the coalfields. His attitude is typically ignorant and belligerent.

"He is also failing to put right past wrongs. Recently released cabinet papers revealed the true extent of the intended destruction of coalfield communities by Mrs Thatcher's administration and the lies that the public were told. In response, Labour has demanded action in the form of an apology, further transparency over interaction between the government and police at the time and an investigation in to events at Orgreave.

"The belligerent response from current Conservative Ministers shows that it's a case of the same old Tories. It is only right that between now and the 30th anniversary of Orgreave David Cameron takes action and delivers justice for the coalfields."

The path towards a low carbon transport future

January 2014 saw a spike in sales of small, fuel-efficient vehicles. Incredibly, pure-electric vehicle registrations increased more than 750 per cent compared to January 2013. Fuel efficient conventional models like the Fiesta, Focus and Corsa dominated in the popularity stakes.

This not only strikes a strong chord with us from a carbon reduction standpoint, but no doubt there are many who welcome this news from a purely economic point of view, too.

But while an overall lift in car sales is good for the industry, it does raise some concerns about whether fuel efficiency can increase enough for net carbon reduction if there are more

cars on the roads. But the trends are positive at least, with even the biggest vehicle in the top ten for sales noted for being among the best in class for fuel efficiency. Mike Hawes, chief executive of motor industry body the SMMT thinks this shows there is a definite direction for manufacturers:

“As fuel economy is a major consideration for many motorists, ongoing investment by vehicle manufacturers in innovative, fuel-efficient technology is a key factor in the growing demand for new cars.”

Elsewhere, the measured roll-out of electric buses is gaining further ground with the launch of a wireless-charging bus route in Milton Keynes. The number 7 will get a booster charge at the

start and end of its route using plates in the road, enabling it to run all day. The service is expected to carry 800,000 people a year.

Perhaps the novelty value will see initial increases in the number of commuters jumping on between Bletchley and Wolverton, but if the single route proves a success, it is hoped it will set a benchmark for everyone in the town to ride electric. If it ultimately means more cars off the road at peak times, this could be a real local success story that should pique interest in other parts of the country.

While making the right changes towards low-carbon transport infrastructure in the pragmatic present is ever

so important, there's still room to dream. And Ford's new C-Max Solar Energi Concept car is one for those who like futuristic flights of fancy.

Partly powered by solar panels on the roof (the very definition of 'sun roof' one might say), the hybrid model claims a range of 620 miles; with extra photovoltaic 'kick' coming from potential owners using a solar-concentrating canopy. The car can also autonomously move under this system, tracking the sunlight.

The fact such a model is at concept stage is very promising – though this one becoming mainstream is still a while away, not least because of safety concerns about the effects of the sun on passengers. If these concerns can be allayed, it's certainly one to watch.



Press release: Keeping children safe online after Christmas tablet buying boom

With tablet computers expected to be one of the top Christmas presents for kids this year, parents face anxiety over what their children will look at online.

The Government has been working with industry to help parents protect their children from inappropriate online content.

The big four internet service providers (ISPs) – TalkTalk, Virgin, Sky and BT – have all agreed to introduce network level filters that would cover all internet devices in the home.

Network level filters allow parents to limit their children's access to adult content by making one universal selection. They no longer have to install filters on every separate device in the home.

TalkTalk and Sky have already made network filters available, while BT and Virgin will follow within the next two months.

A recent Ofcom report showed a dramatic rise in the number of younger children owning tablets. The use of tablet computers has tripled among 5 to 15-year-olds since 2012 (42%, up from 14%), and 28% of infants aged 3-4 now use a tablet at home.

Culture Secretary Maria Miller said:

“Many more children will be unwrapping smartphones and tablet devices on Christmas Day.

“ For parents and children, the internet is fast becoming part of everyday life at work, at school and socially but parents are rightly wary

about what children are being exposed to online.

“ We have worked with industry to make it far easier for parents to be confident their children are being protected.

“ Parents need to think about putting filters on their accounts and finding out more about keeping children safe online.”

The four main ISPs – who supply internet connections to almost 9 out of 10 UK homes – have also agreed that all new broadband customers will have the settings for family friendly filters automatically switched on.

And by the end of 2014 all existing customers will have been presented with an unavoidable choice about installing family friendly

content filters which the user will not be able to skip.

Only the adult account holder will be able to change the filter settings.

Outside the home, all mobile operators have agreed to ensure that adult content is filtered and users will have to prove they are over 18 to switch them off.

Family friendly filters are now being applied to public wi-fi by the six companies that provide 90% of public wi-fi across the UK.



The Art of Manufacturing

Part 2

The Art of Manufacturing has been produced by Keith Walters to promote and encourage the desire to make manufacturing a prolific career path and enterprise within the UK.



Keith Walters is a leading UK manufacturer

Since the war, there has been a steady decline in manufacturing employment but a continuing rise in manufacturing output. Growth in technological advancement has enabled

greater production using fewer workers who are generally more highly skilled.

The mass employment of workers performing labour-intensive and repetitive tasks has largely been replaced by machines or outsourced to 'offshore resources' such as China and India where manpower, products and components can be cheaply supplied.

Whilst it could be argued that it's 'all built in China now', the UK still maintains its lead as a high-end manufacturer and is the sixth largest manufacturer in the world. The danger lies in these offshore resources 'squaring the circle' by producing highly skilled workers manufacturing high-end products of their own.

It is in fact the initiation and control of the full process that we need to pass on to future generations in order for the UK to continue to maintain and grow its skill base. Outsourcing will be detrimental to the future of our trades if it means using the skills of trained workers elsewhere, leading to the inevitable brain drain as home grown talents are forced to seek opportunities abroad.

This serialisation highlights the importance of training in trade skills to create the manufacturers of tomorrow.

In this second part we look at what manufacturing is and how good design can aid longevity of a product.

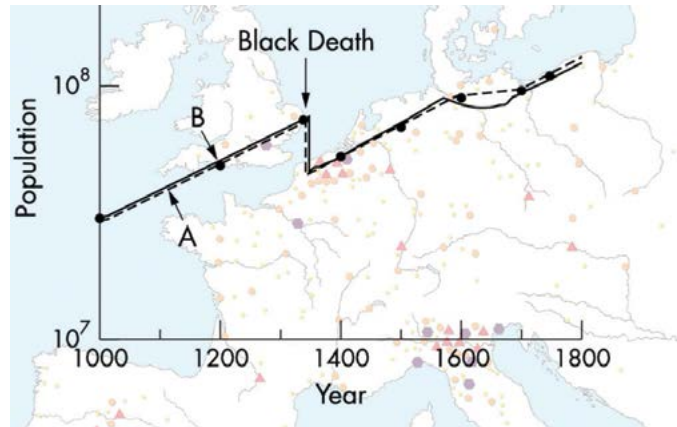
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WORLDWIDE
Design and Innovation



What is manufacturing?

According to Wikipedia, Manufacturing is:

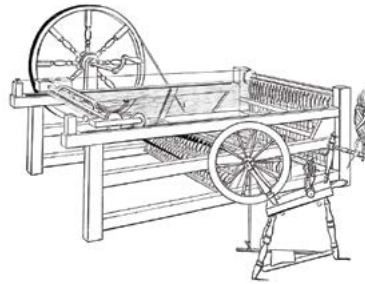
“The production of goods for use or sale using labour and machines, tools, chemical and biological processing, or formulation. The term may refer to a range of human activity, from handicraft to high tech, but is most commonly applied to industrial production, in which raw materials are transformed into finished goods on a large scale.”



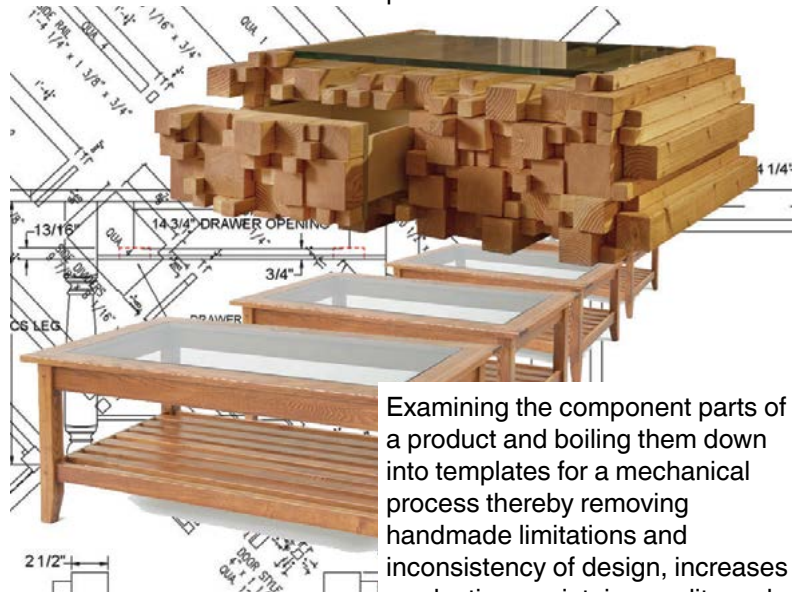
Turn up the Volume

As populations grew so did the competition to provide goods for an ever increasing consumer base that in turn lead to the development of more efficient manufacturing techniques producing higher volume products at lower cost.

The Art of Manufacturing - welters®



For example, prior to the Industrial Revolution, textiles were primarily made of wool and were hand spun. With the invention of the spinning wheel and the loom, cotton was produced quicker and eventually replaced wool in the textile field. This dramatically reduced production time and the cost to produce material.



Examining the component parts of a product and boiling them down into templates for a mechanical process thereby removing handmade limitations and inconsistency of design, increases production, maintains quality and lowers the cost.

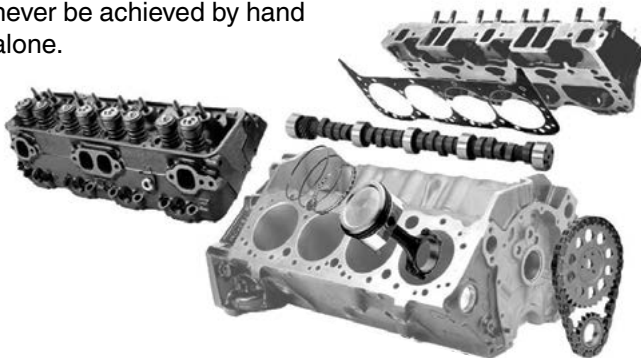
Traditional hand made items can sit equally alongside their mass produced equivalents.

Which one of these items is hand made and which one is flat pack?



Mass producing an item does not necessarily mean a reduction in quality either. Improving and refining the making process to ensure reliable reproduction with no discernable differences

allows a product to be manufactured with a sustainable level of quality and accuracy that could never be achieved by hand alone.



Good designs work

In general, for a product to be successful it must first fulfil a number of criteria.

A combination of all three creates desirability which is a valuable asset when manufacturing a premium product in a competitive market.

A good example of this is the iPhone. Technology wise there are more advanced phones on the market but the combination of function, design and style combines to make it one of the most sought-after phones available.

Modern electronics design is constantly evolving driven by the fast-paced development of the technology they support. What seems new and fresh can change within a few years to be old and obsolete. Mobile phones are especially susceptible; the first iPhone was released in 2007 and has been superseded five times by subsequent models (iPhone 5 at the time of writing).

Function

it must do the job it was designed to do well

Design

the design must aid not hinder the function

Style

the style creates an aesthetic for the design



What was once cutting edge technology can very quickly look very out-dated



Whilst some designs are fleeting and of the moment (and fashion dictates that this is necessary) others are so well conceived that they stay with us with very little adaptation over many years and are instantly recognisable. No prizes for guessing what this image is of...



Robin Day polypropylene stacking chair

Designed in 1962 the chair was one of the first mass produced items to use the injection moulding process.



This deceptively simple design created a low-cost, strong, durable yet lightweight utility chair that can stack safely and easily.

It is made from single formed polypropylene on an enamelled bent tubular steel base.

The chair quickly became the staple chair of choice for schools, offices, canteens, hospitals, airports etc, selling an estimated 50 million units to date.

The design is still in production today and is so iconic it has even appeared on British stamps.



The Fender Stratocaster

Designed in 1954 and manufactured continuously by the Fender Musical Instruments Corporation to the present.



The Fender Stratocaster is one of the most recognisable guitars in the world and also one of the most copied shapes alongside the Gibson Les Paul.

The Gem Paperclip

Introduced in the 1890's the basic design of the gem paperclip hasn't changed in over 100 years.



welters Occasional Chair A120

A comfortable design formed around tubular chrome frame with or without arm rests. This classic design is still available in a variety of different materials.



Part 3 'Evolution' will continue in our next edition.

Great Britain's smart grid to revolutionise energy sector

The Smart Grid Forum's Vision and Routemap sets out how smart technologies will deliver cost-saving efficiencies, give consumers greater control over their energy use, support jobs and growth, increase energy security and enable integration of low carbon technologies.

The Smart Grid Forum has previously shown how combining smart grid and conventional technologies have the potential to deliver up to £12 billion savings by 2050.

Other studies have found that smart grids could benefit customers including through reduced costs and deliver economic benefits such as creating 9,000 jobs and £5 billion in exports.

The UK has made significant progress to date in developing

its smart grid and is recognised as a European leader for investment in smart grid research and demonstration.

Energy Minister Michael Fallon said:

"The development of a smart grid offers exciting opportunities for the UK. Our electricity market reforms will provide a stable and attractive environment for investors in low-carbon generation and support growth. It is therefore vital that we modernise our infrastructure to ensure it supports deployment and meets customer needs. The smart grid will also create thousands of jobs, support economic growth and help build a Greater Britain."

Hannah Nixon, Senior Partner at Ofgem said:

"Promoting security of

supply and sustainability for future generations is key to Ofgem's work to protect consumers. Smart grids will take us a step further towards an affordable, low carbon energy system and has the potential to reduce costs for consumers. The UK is leading the way in Europe as Ofgem is encouraging network companies to innovate and develop smarter networks. We recognise that the transition to a smarter grid will bring opportunities and challenges to all involved and look forward to continue working with others across the energy sector for a smarter future."

The Vision and Routemap calls for Great Britain to build on its initial success by ensuring regulatory and commercial frameworks support the deployment of smart technologies and new commercial practices, and

provide strong leadership in rolling out successful smart grid pilots into business as usual services.

The smart grid is expected to enhance energy security and integration of low carbon technologies through greater monitoring and control of the network. This will enable network companies to anticipate and identify problems more quickly and manage supply and demand at a local level.

*The document can be downloaded at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/smart-grid-forums-smart-grid-vision-and-routemap>*



UK Cemeteries Postponing Excavations due to Weather

Saturated Ground Conditions

As the wet weather continues, many cemeteries are encountering difficulties in excavating graves for burials and an increasing number are being forced to limit or postpone digging for burials until conditions improve.



Excavating earthen graves in wet ground can be dangerous and risk of grave collapse is high.

Many earthen burial areas have become waterlogged due to the sustained wet weather causing problems when digging graves and some areas have become impossible to excavate altogether.



Saturated ground conditions makes excavating earthen graves hazardous

Interring in the saturated ground also runs the risk of damaging existing graves and the area in general can quickly become a quagmire which is unsightly and hazardous to visitors.

Business as Usual

Despite the problems experienced in many UK cemeteries for burials, all **welters®** Cemetery Village operations continue to operate a normal service and the full complement of **welters®** funeral experience support services are also continuing uninterrupted.

Cemeteries are also reporting that demand for our burial chambers and mausoleums has increased as families are seeing the obvious advantages of our systems when compared to the waterlogged and unsightly earthen burial sections.

welters® Cemetery Villages are designed for year-round interment and usually combine above and below ground burial options with facilities for cremated remains. Burial chambers can always be opened easily and safely and there is no risk of the grave



Burial chambers provide safe, year-round interment provision



Community mausoleum ready for interment and burial chamber prepared for burial in background.

collapsing. Similarly our private family and community mausoleums provide continuous interment provision.



Our Interment Support teams are available to carry out preparation and sealing up or to provide training for cemetery staff in the procedures.

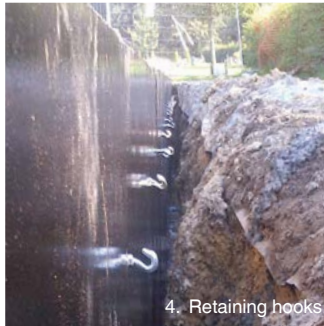
Access to the grave or mausoleum is always possible and our interment support teams are available to train staff or carry out the sealing of the chamber or mausoleum as part of our Interment Support Service.

Never cancel a grave again

EMAIL HELPLINE
admin@welters-worldwide.com



3. Bolted to concrete foundation



4. Retaining hooks



5. Rebar attached to hooks



2. Sealant applied underside



1. Bituminous coating applied



6. Cement pour around excavation completes the installation

welters[®]

ORGANISATION WORLDWIDE

Design and Innovation

Extreme Weather Solutions **Optional specification burial chamber** **upgrade and high watertable** **installations**

This method ensures where required that burial chambers remain secure and free from water ingress during extreme conditions.

- The burial chambers are given a bituminous coating and a continuous bead of polyurethane concrete sealant is applied to the underside of each chamber.
- The chamber is then bolted to a reinforced concrete foundation.
- External anchor hooks are then fixed to the external chamber sides and rebar attached to the hooks.
- A cement pour around the edge of the excavation completes the installation providing a sealed interment facility impervious to water ingress.

*Higher specification waterproof burial chambers are also available and manufactured to comply with BS 8102:2009 Type B construction.

Largest pumping operation ever continues as Somerset Levels experience biggest flood for almost two decades

Heavy showers could cause further flooding in south west and southern England through to Wednesday and people should continue to check their flood risk, the Environment Agency said today.

With the ground already saturated, rivers and groundwater levels remain very responsive to rainfall, particularly on the Somerset Levels and Moors– which are currently experiencing the most significant flood for 20 years.

Somerset Levels

Environment Agency teams continue to operate up to 62 pumps, 24-hours a day, to drain an estimated 1.5 million tonnes of water (equivalent to 600 Olympic-sized swimming pools) off an area of the Levels spanning 65 square kilometres – the biggest

pumping operation ever undertaken in the county.

There is also a risk of groundwater flooding in Hampshire until Wednesday. Parts of Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire, West Sussex, West Berkshire and Surrey may also experience localised groundwater flooding over the next five days.

The Somerset Levels has a history of flooding dating back centuries. The tidal range in the Bristol Channel is the second highest in the world – with high tides causing flood water to back up along the rivers across the Levels and Moors.

Currently, around 40 properties have flooded on the Levels, while defences have protected over 3,500 properties and 200 square kilometres of land within the Parrett and Tone, and Brue

and Axe catchments.

The Environment Agency will be working with Government, the local council, Internal Drainage Boards and other partners on a long-term action-plan for tackling flood risk on the Somerset Moors and Levels.

Extraordinary combination of weather conditions

Since early December, flood schemes have defended more than 1.1m homes and businesses and protected nearly 2,500 square kilometres of farmland across England.

Kate Marks, Environment Agency flood risk manager, said: “The country has faced an extraordinary combination of weather conditions over the last six weeks and our thoughts are with those communities that

have and are experiencing flooding.

“We are doing everything we can to pump water off the Somerset Levels and have 65 pumps working 24-7 in the biggest pumping operation ever undertaken in the county.

“Nationally we spent £45m in the last financial year on river clearance, including dredging and weed removal and de-silting work was last carried out on pinch points on the Parrett and Tone rivers in November. However, dredging is often not the best long term or economic solution and increased dredging of rivers on the Somerset Levels would not have prevented the recent widespread flooding.”



Flooding should be “National Priority” says the National Flood Forum

Tackling flooding should be a National Priority, according to the chairman of the National Flood Forum.

There have been three major flood events in the last month – the tidal surge of 5th December, hitting east and west coasts, the inland flood of Christmas Eve, hitting southern counties and the New Year storms that have hit both inland and coastal communities. Some 2000 homes have flooded. This follows 2012, when more than 8000 homes flooded during the year.

Making flooding a national priority means empowering effort at every level to achieve solutions that work for communities. Solutions that don't just address

the consequences of yesterday's flood, but make communities ready for tomorrow's flood.

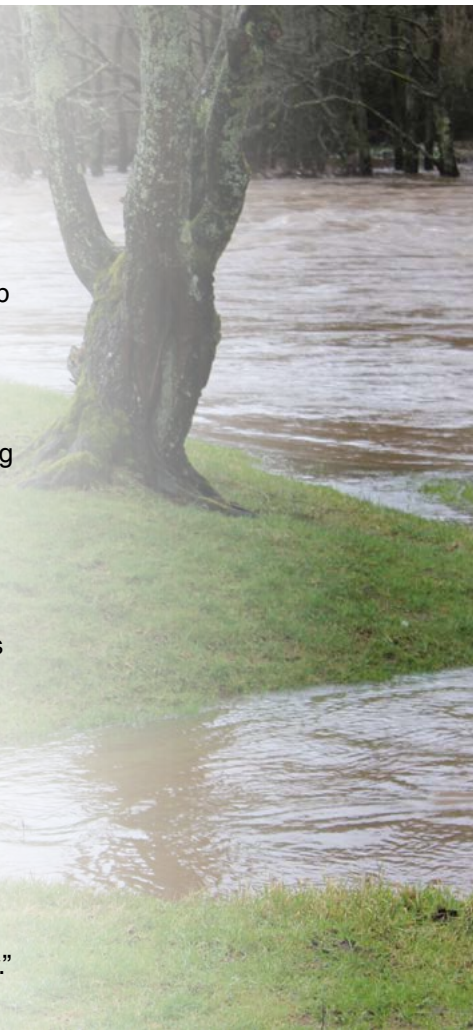
Too often the debate becomes an argument about sums of money being spent – government protestations in recent days are just the latest. Yet it's not just money that is the answer – it's how it is spent.

It's about joined-up thinking to address problems. With joined-up thinking, you don't cut the staff at the EA who manage flooding and maintain flood assets. With joined-up thinking, you don't keep cutting local council capability to deal with the new flooding responsibilities they've been given. With joined-up thinking, you don't cut their ability to resist development

that will add to flooding problems.

Chairman of the National Flood Forum, Charles Tucker says “With joined-up thinking, you invest in communities to develop resilience and prepare for future flooding. You invest in a national effort, requiring the agencies responsible for flood risk management to work with local people, equipping them to tackle local flooding problems. You give local communities the tools to find solutions themselves.”

“Tackling flooding should be a National Priority. Government needs to harness all the resources available in a co-ordinated way to halt the relentless increase in flooding misery.”



Groundwater flooding in the UK: February 2014



Hydrogeologist, David Macdonald, surveying flood levels in Oxford in January 2014.

Groundwater levels in some regions of the UK are currently at record highs. This has resulted in ongoing groundwater flooding, particularly in the south and south-west of the UK.

This flooding is located on the Chalk outcrop and also on the floodplain gravels associated with the region's major rivers.

Although groundwater levels, and the incidences

of groundwater flooding, will decrease in the floodplain gravels once the rivers return to more normal flows, due to the nature of groundwater movement in the Chalk aquifer, groundwater flooding may persist in some areas for weeks or months ahead.

Impact of exceptional rainfall

The winter of 2013–14 has seen record rainfall in the UK. December rainfall was

154 per cent of the average for the month across the country. This was followed by the wettest January on record for Southern England.

Infiltration of December rain filled up much of the available storage in the ground (soil, gravels, rocks) in many areas. Much of the subsequent rainfall therefore had nowhere to go except to run off the land, moving quickly to rivers and resulting in widespread fluvial flooding.

Groundwater levels in late 2013

Groundwater levels at the end of Autumn 2013 were around the average for that time of the year, slightly lower in some regions.

Groundwater levels that are deep below the ground

surface are usually slow to respond to rainfall due to the slow downward movement of water to the water table. However, the amount of rainfall that occurred in December in some regions meant that some groundwater levels did start to rise quickly. Due to the low to average starting point these rises were not initially problematic in the majority of aquifers in the south.

For more information contact David Macdonald <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>



A flooded street in Worcester

£10 million Farming Flood Recovery Fund available

Farmers whose businesses have been directly affected by flooding will be able to access £10 million of government support. Farming Minister George Eustice has announced.



George Eustice MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for farming, food and marine environment

Farming Recovery Fund guidance for applicants

The £10 million Farming Recovery Fund was announced by the Prime Minister on the 11 February

as part of a comprehensive package of measures to help hard-working people in flood-hit areas following the wettest winter on record.

It will open on Friday 28 Feb to provide assistance with four key areas of recovery, offering support with uninsured losses to get farms into production again.

- the restoration of productive grassland;
- the restoration of productive arable and horticultural land;
- restoring farm vehicle access to fields;
- improvements to agricultural drainage.

Under this new scheme, all farmers affected by the flooding will be able to apply for emergency funding of up to £5,000, covering up to 100% of

their business costs. This will ensure that they can continue growing crops and grazing livestock.

The majority of the Farming Recovery Fund will be reserved for farm businesses whose farms remain flooded. Unlike the initial grant, the upper limit of this funding will be set when the impact on these longer term losses from flood damage are clearer, once the flood waters recede.

George Eustice, Farming Minister, said:

We want to help farmers affected by flooding and the severe weather to get their businesses back on track as soon as possible. The new £10 million Farming Recovery Fund has been

set up to help farmers directly affected meet short term costs as the flood waters recede.

Additionally, the £10 million Farming and Forestry Improvement Scheme will offer eligible farmers grants of up to £35,000 on schemes designed to make businesses more resilient.

Designed with the NFU and local councils, the Farming Recovery Fund will be simple and easy for farmers to apply for through a single point of contact in Defra's Rural Development Team, by emailing frf@defra.gsi.gov.uk or calling 0300 060 2700. Funding will open on Friday 28 February.

Further details and documentation are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-recovery-fund-guidance-for-applicants>

Energy companies to offer direct debit refunds to British households

Four of the big six energy companies will now automatically refund direct debits to customers who are in credit. While EON were already doing this, negotiations chaired by Energy and Climate Change Minister Greg Barker have resulted in EDF, British Gas and SSE plus First Utility following suit and passing consumers money back to them.

DECC has been in discussions with energy companies to provide customers with an automatic refund if they have a credit balance over a minimum threshold (varying between 1p and £10) at annual review point. Alternatively, the money can be rolled over to take off the next bill if the customer prefers.

Rt Hon Greg Barker, Minister for Energy and Climate Change said:

This is important and welcome news for the 55 per cent of energy customers who chose to pay by direct debit. The Coalition is committed to helping hardworking people reduce the cost of energy bills and this will ensure that customers are rightly returned the cash that is theirs without having to ask.

There is still more to do but this builds on the Coalition reforms to the energy market, and to have five of the major energy companies agreeing to this new approach will go a long way towards rebuilding consumer trust. I hope other energy companies

will adopt this approach very soon.

The automatic refund of direct debit provides customers with more control over their energy bills. At the mid-year point on an annual direct debit arrangement, the supplier will:

- Ask the customer for an actual meter reading if necessary; and
- Once they have received it, review the direct debit and change it to make it as accurate as possible for the remainder of the year to avoid a large build-up of credit or debit on their account.

First Minister and Governor of Bank of England meeting

Following the meeting (Jan 29) between the First Minister Alex Salmond and the Governor of the Bank of England at Bute House in Edinburgh, First Minister Alex Salmond said:

“I was delighted to welcome the new Bank of England Governor to Edinburgh on his first official visit to Scotland since his appointment.

“We greatly value our strong working relationship with the Bank and its commitment to operational independence and impartiality in political debate.

“The discussion was private but I welcome that the Governor has confirmed his willingness to continue technical discussions, inaugurated by his predecessor Lord King, between the Scottish Government and the Bank of England in advance of the referendum.”

£8 million boost for energy storage innovation

Two British companies have been awarded over £8million to spur on innovation in storing energy, Energy and Climate Change Minister Greg Barker has announced.

The announcement comes as UK public funders of low carbon innovation today provide enhanced investor certainty, with the publication of a joint Strategic Framework by the Low Carbon Innovation Coordination Group.

The contract has been awarded to a partnership of Viridor Waste Management Ltd and Highview Power Storage, as part of the Department of Energy and Climate Change's innovation competition to support energy storage technology research and development.

Viridor and Highview will

use the funding to develop a technology to store air in a liquid format, which can then be used to supply electricity at times of high demand. The technology will be connected to the National Grid, and will be used to test balancing supply and demand using stored energy.

Energy and Climate Change Minister Greg Barker said: "Storing energy will become increasingly important in the move towards a low carbon economy, and has the potential to save the energy system over £4 billion by 2050.

"Energy storage systems are potentially revolutionary technologies - just imagine how much the energy system will change if we're able to manage supply and demand better by storing

energy cost-effectively, not to mention the benefits for British research and manufacturing industries."

Gareth Brett, CEO of Highview Power Storage, said: "By selecting to fund the demonstration of Highview's Liquid Air Energy Storage system, DECC has given a British company a great opportunity to begin commercialising a home grown, innovative technology that has the potential to make a major contribution in terms of helping balance electricity systems in the future.

"The collaboration with Viridor will enable Highview to showcase the technology at larger scale, harvesting waste heat from landfill gas engines and demonstrating our readiness for deployment elsewhere."

Viridor Chief Executive, Ian McAulay said: "We are pleased to have secured funding for this important project. With ever growing pressure on natural resources, it is essential that we develop innovative and sustainable methods to generate and store energy not only to cut down our carbon footprint but to ensure long-term energy security.

"Innovation has been at the heart of successful businesses in Britain and it is great news that the government recognises and supports its development."

At present, almost all electricity is generated when required and networks are designed to accommodate highest demands, even if they are of very short duration.

Energy storage systems offer the opportunity to store surplus electricity for use at times of high demand. This innovative technology could play an important role in supporting UK growth in low carbon, renewable energy sources and in maintaining security of electricity supply in the UK.

Environment Agency finishes repairs to Preston Beach sea defences

During a series of severe storms in early January and February 2014 the Preston Beach Sea Defence Scheme took a pounding and lost so much of its shingle in front of the promenade that the sea wall was in danger of breaching or being overtopped by large waves.

Completed in 1996 to offer protection to the A353 and some 30 properties at Lodmoor and Overcombe, the scheme has a promenade and sea wall, fronted by imported shingle which acts as a buffer to wave energy.

A number of severe flood warnings were issued in the New Year due to the loss of beach material during previous storms and the ability of waves to run up and over the sea wall. The

road has been closed at these times to avoid risk to life from waves laden with shingle hitting vehicles.

The local Environment Agency operations teams were supported by staff from the Midlands Region during January to recover material between the storms which has been lost off the beach. This work has had to be repeated several times up until the extreme storm on 5 February.

The beach was reduced to no crest and foundations in front of the promenade were exposed.

The Environment Agency mobilised a contractor to carry out emergency reinforcement of the beach crest using rocks from Portland placed under the shingle down the beach in

front of the promenade to protect the foundations and the integrity of the scheme.

“The work involved burying limestone boulders up to six tonnes in weight within the beach over a length of 350 metres to ensure a permanent crest in front of the sea wall. Around 3,955 tonnes of rock was placed under the shingle to maintain the crest width during future storms,” said Neil Watson for the Environment Agency.

The Environment Agency held a well-attended local meeting on 26 February to explain the emergency works and future commitments to monitoring and improvements.

DFE Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents underlines strain Cameron's childcare crunch is having on family life - Lucy Powell

Lucy Powell MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for Childcare and Children, commenting on the Department for Education Childcare and Early Years Survey of Parents: 2012 to 2013, said: "These figures underline the strain that David Cameron's childcare crunch is having on family life. We've a cost-of-living crisis with families struggling with soaring childcare costs - up 30 per cent under the Tories – and a squeeze on places, meanwhile there are hundreds of fewer Sure Start Centres thanks to David Cameron. Labour would extend free early education for three and four year olds with parents in work from 15 to 25 hours, worth £1500 per child. We would also tackle availability of before and after school childcare by introducing a primary childcare guarantee to help parents."

University application rate for 18-year-olds at a record high – Vince Cable

Figures released by UCAS show that the number of 18-year olds in England applying to university has reached a record high.



Vince Cable MP, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills

The application rate for 18-year-olds in England has increased to its highest ever level of 34.8%. The rate of disadvantaged young people in England has also increased to its highest ever level, rising to 20.7%.

This means that 18 year olds living in the most disadvantaged areas of England are nearly twice as likely to apply to university than they were 10 years ago increasing from 10.7% in 2004 to 20.7% in 2014.

Overall the applicant rate is up by 4% to 580,000.

Commenting, Liberal Democrat Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Vince Cable said:

"Going to university should be accessible to everyone with ability, not the ability to pay. Our reforms were tough but they were right and we are now seeing the fruits of our efforts. Eighteen-year olds from poorer backgrounds are applying

at a record rate and are now twice as likely to consider going to university than ten years ago.

"It's also good to see an increase in the number of people applying for engineering and technology. These are key to ensuring our country stays ahead of the global competition.

"It's clear that young people understand that investing in a degree is an investment for their future. New students do not pay fees upfront, there is more financial support for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and everyone will make lower loan repayments once they are in well paid jobs."

Welsh Language Tribunal a step closer

Appointing members to the Welsh Language Tribunal is an integral part of the process of establishing Welsh language standards, which are intended to improve Welsh Language services for people across Wales.

The role of the Tribunal will be to hear appeals against the Welsh Language Commissioner's decisions in relation to the standards.

The Tribunal will be made up of a President, legally qualified members and lay members. The President must have knowledge of, and proficiency in, the Welsh language and is required to have at least 10 years legal experience.

The advert for the post of President has been published on the Welsh Government website today. It will also be advertised on the Judicial Appointments Commission website and in other relevant publications that will encourage a strong and diverse field of candidates.

Other members of the Tribunal will be appointed later in 2014.



welters® Heritage Galloway Herd - feeding time on the farm

Schools need more competitive sports, not less

School pupils need more opportunities for competitive sport, not less, the Scottish Conservatives have argued.

Speaking in a debate on the upcoming Commonwealth Games, sport spokeswoman Liz Smith said the lack of access for youngsters has had a detrimental impact on performance in some areas at national level.

And rather than reduce the competitiveness of sport in schools, it has been argued that the reverse is necessary if Glasgow 2014 is to have a lasting legacy on performance.

Scottish Conservative sport spokeswoman Liz Smith MSP said:

“The opportunity to participate in competitive sport ought to be available to all pupils in all schools.

“For far too long, Scotland has had to put up with a view in some educational quarters that competitive sport is harmful because it breeds division between pupils.

“For example, there have been some schools which banned sports days because of the fear that some pupils would be put off sport for life because they end up on the losing side.

“I cannot think of anything that is more detrimental to the development of young people and their outlook on life.

“Learning how to cope with winning and losing is an essential part of growing up and I am certain this will be a view which is unanimously shared by all our athletes who will be competing at Glasgow 2014.

“It is also a view shared by SportScotland who, at the recent meeting of the cross-party group on sport in Holyrood, made very clear just how important competitive sport must be in the context of a lasting legacy for Glasgow 2014.

“Top class international performance, to which Scotland rightly aspires, depends largely on what happens in our schools since they are the main institutions which will be responsible for developing the right ethos in our young people.

“Competitive opportunities

– particularly fixtures against other schools and clubs – are an essential part of that process and they should be available to all young people whatever their background.”



Scottish firms best in UK for training

A new survey has highlighted that young people in Scotland are the best prepared for work in the UK.



Minister for Youth Employment
Angela Constance

The survey, conducted amongst a number of employers from across the UK and published by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) found the following:

- The majority of employers who had

recruited someone directly from a Scottish school, college or university thought that they were well prepared or very well prepared for work

- 46 per cent of Scottish establishments had recruited a young person under the age of 25 in the last two to three years, an increase on the last survey and the highest level in the UK

- 70 per cent of Scottish establishments provided training for their staff in the 12 months prior to the survey, the highest in the UK

- 65 per cent of Scottish employees received training from their employer, the highest level in the UK.

Minister for Youth Employment Angela Constance said:

“Today’s report outlines a number of key strengths for skills and training in Scotland including positive feedback on the work-readiness of our young people and an improving situation on skills gaps, even while our economic recovery remains fragile. I know from my travels around Scotland that many of our employers recognise the potential of our young people and are dedicated to harnessing their potential. However, even more firms could have a role to play in supporting young people towards work and this will be stepped up further in the coming year.

“Taking on young people isn’t just the right thing to do, it’s the smart thing

to do and today’s report gives us a strong platform for the years ahead. Challenges remain, but we continue to make good progress on youth employment and are better placed that the rest of the UK on youth employment and unemployment rates. However, we aspire to be amongst the very best in Europe and last year we invited Sir Ian Wood to lead work on ways to improve the transition from education to employment and our system of vocational training overall.

“Regional and sector-led Skills Investment Plans are also in place, using evidence from industry to help understand the skills needs of key areas such as financial services, tourism and energy. This will help match ambitions for growth with the skills required and ensure that local labour market demands are met. However, with the full job-creating and economic powers of independence, even more could be done to support young people into employment.”

Gagging law not fit for our democracy, says Andrew Cooper

"This gagging law is a sinister development not fit for our democracy," said leading Green Andrew Cooper responding with concern to the passing of the "Charities Gagging Law."



Green Party Cllr Andrew Cooper

"Charities and Trades Unions will be silenced while lobbyists for rich special interests continue as usual," continued Andrew Cooper, who is lead Yorkshire and the Humber candidate in the

European elections.

The new law - properly the Transparency of Lobbying, Non Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill - means that Campaign groups will have to register and report on their spending if over £10,000 in one constituency during the year before an election.

It is expected that the bureaucratic burden and the fear of getting it wrong will silence many.

"With European elections May 2014, and a general election in 2015 this would silence the Government's critics for nearly two years!

"Food banks, welfare advisors and women's refuges could struggle

to question the welfare reforms that leave their clients destitute. Housing and homeless charities could be silenced on the bedroom tax," Cllr Cooper ended.

"We can expect attacks on charities and Trade Unions soon. Now this law is on the books, the Government will be on the attack against its critics."

Conservative MPs have already attacked the RSPCA via the Charity Commission for their work around animal welfare.

Migrants should have to pay in before they take benefits out

Another government announcement on changes to migrant benefits has been rubbished as "a gimmick" by UKIP's Head of Policy Unit Tim Aker.

"This is a key example of government posturing when the horse has already bolted out of the barn door. It is an electoral gimmick.

"These changes will still mean that migrants can come and claim jobseeker's allowance, but that they may be challenged if they seek to claim additional benefits on top. It isn't good enough.

"Under UKIP policy, those wishing to come here to permanently settle will have to financially support themselves for five years. Those coming on work permits would be in skilled jobs that will ensure they are a net contributor to the Treasury and in jobs where Britain has a skills shortage. That is the type of robust approach on immigration that people want, but that of course we can't have whilst we remain in the EU."



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Bailiffs getting ready for tough new regime

Bailiffs and councils must make sure debts are collected in a fair and responsible way, Justice Minister Lord Faulks said today.



Justice Minister Lord Faulks

Speaking just weeks before new laws on rogue bailiff behaviour take effect, Lord Faulks addressed the Civil Enforcement Association conference in London today, speaking to an audience of more than 300 representatives of

local authorities and bailiffs companies.

Major reforms to the rules for bailiffs will take effect in April, banning them from heavy-handed behaviour but also making sure they can still collect debts fairly.

Lord Faulks told the audience they would be key to ensuring that the people of England and Wales have the fair and effective enforcement system they deserved – and urged them to rise to the challenge.

Speaking after the conference, Lord Faulks said:

‘There are some very good, reputable bailiffs around, but we know there is bad practice out there that needs to be dealt with.

‘A small minority of bailiffs

have been allowed to give the industry a bad name.

‘These laws will help to clean up the industry and ensure bailiffs play by the rules. They will also make sure businesses and public bodies can collect their debts fairly.’

The changes will put in place new mandatory training and certification requirements for bailiffs, and simplify the fees that they are allowed to charge for their services.

They will also impose rules on how and when bailiffs can pursue debts, including:

- Stopping bailiffs entering homes when only children are present.
- Banning bailiffs from visiting debtors at night – they will only be allowed to enter between 6am and 9pm.
- Banning landlords from

using bailiffs to seize property for residential rent arrears without going to court.

- Preventing bailiffs from taking household items, such as a cooker, microwave, refrigerator or washing machine, because they are deemed to be reasonably required to satisfy the basic domestic needs of the debtor.
- Ensuring a notice period of seven days is given to the debtor before bailiffs take control of the debtor's goods.
- Banning bailiffs from selling goods removed from a debtor, unless seven days have passed from the date the goods were removed.
- Making bailiffs responsible for proving to a court that there are, or likely to be, goods of the debtor on the premises before being granted the power to use reasonable force to gain entry.

Before a warrant is granted, bailiffs must give the court information on the likely means of entry, the amount of force required and how the premises will be left in a secure state afterwards.

Prime Minister's crass anti tax stance would mean closure of "schools, hospitals, roads and police."

Responding to comments made by the Prime Minister to the Federation of Small Business that "I don't really like taxes" the Green Party leader will tell students at Canterbury Christ Church University that the Prime Minister is "effectively saying that he doesn't like schools, hospitals, roads, police, for all of these services and institutions are paid for through our taxes".

Natalie Bennett continued:

"The taxes we pay are investments in our communities, in having the facilities and services that all of us will need at some time or another, and the safety net that should ensure everyone in our society, whatever their needs, abilities or luck, has a decent quality of life.

"Is this is the same David Cameron who in Davos last year was proclaiming to

lead the global fight against "aggressive avoidance" of tax?

"Is it any wonder that this government has taken no effective action against the parasitical multinational companies like Amazon, Starbucks and Ikea who've chosen to arrange their affairs so they pay peanuts in tax, while they sponge off other people's taxes to provide the roads, policing, education and other services essential to their businesses."

The Green Party does support significant reform of our tax system, to make it more progressive, including replacing council tax with land value tax and VAT with 'damage taxes' reflecting the environmental and social costs of products.

Cameron's small business agenda ignores EU reality

The Prime Minister's pledge to the Federation of Small Businesses to cut red tape completely ignores the amount of regulation coming from Brussels.

UKIP Leader Nigel Farage argues: "It's all well and good for the PM to talk about slashing red tape. In reality Britain's hands are tied by EU membership.

"Since this government came to power, more than 3,500 EU regulations have been hung round the necks of British businesses. That's over 13 million words of additional regulation since 2010 under David Cameron as Prime Minister.

"We must get real. The burden of regulation on businesses, especially

small to medium sized enterprises, can only seriously be dealt with once we leave the EU. Until then, the blizzard of burdensome dictats from Brussels will continue to make life harder for entrepreneurs in the UK, and renders Britain's economy far less vibrant that it has the potential to be.

"Mr. Cameron also made the point that people want an immigration system with proper controls. Yet he estimated that migration from Romania and Bulgaria has so far been 'reasonable' based on zero evidence as we of course have a completely open door thanks to his government.

"UKIP's policy of work permits for economic migrants is the type of sensible approach that the British public want and why UKIP is now the most trusted party on immigration.

"Only by leaving the EU, we can unlock Britain's true economic potential."

