

News story: Former Obama advisor to examine digital competition in the UK

- Harvard Professor Jason Furman will lead government expert panel
- he will consider how to guarantee new tech markets support competition in the UK
- data could be worth £60 billion a year to the economy by 2020

Plans to ensure the UK remains at the centre of the digital revolution have been set out today (2 August 2018) by the Chancellor.

A new expert panel – chaired by former US President Barack Obama's chief economic advisor, Professor Jason Furman – will look at competition in the digital economy, and how to make sure the UK remains a world leader in this field.

While the UK has a competitive and well-regulated economy, rapid advances in the digital sector have led to the emergence of powerful new companies. This has raised questions about how to guarantee a competitive economy, while respecting people's privacy and ensuring the whole of society can benefit from technological progress.

The appointment was unveiled alongside the [publication of a government report on the value of data](#). This cited evidence that data-driven technology could be worth £60 billion a year to the UK economy by 2020.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond, said:

The UK is leading the way in the digital revolution. Our tech sector is now worth over £116 billion and a new digital job is being created in this country every 50 minutes.

This is something to be proud of, but at the same time it is only right that we ask the big questions about how we ensure these new digital markets work for everyone.

I am therefore pleased to appoint Professor Furman to lead this important work. His experience will be invaluable as we ensure that our market regulating institutions are fit for purpose in the digital age.

Professor Jason Furman said:

While digital markets have produced significant consumer benefits, including in the UK, we need to fully understand how competition policy needs to adapt going forward.

Our focus needs to be on ensuring that consumers continue to

benefit from these new technologies while maximizing the innovative potential from the economy.

I am pleased to lead this panel and look forward to bringing my experience to this important piece of work of international interest.

The panel will be made up of thinkers with an in-depth knowledge of competition law and digital markets. It will examine the UK's competition regime in the context of the digital economy. It will consider questions such as:

- how to ensure new firms can adequately compete, allowing choice to consumers and encouraging innovation
- the best approach to handle mergers between tech companies
- the impact on competition of having data held within a few big companies
- the pros and cons of digital markets becoming concentrated, between only a small number of companies

The paper considers ways that the UK can further capitalise on the opportunities presented by an increasingly data-driven economy and will inform the development of the National Data Strategy, announced in June.

The panel will also provide an independent voice to support the ongoing review of competition law announced in the [Modernising consumer markets green paper](#).

Further information

Professor Jason Furman served as the top economic advisor in the Obama administration, including his role as chair of the Council of Economic Advisers from August 2013 to January 2017, acting as both chief economist and a member of the cabinet. In academia, he has conducted research in a wide range of areas including: fiscal policy, competition policy, tax policy, health economics and international and domestic macroeconomics.

The panel will run from Sept 2018 to early 2019, culminating in a final report of recommendations to government.

[Press release: Come along to flood scheme update at Forge Mill Farm](#)

If you are planning a visit to Sandwell Valley Park, Forge Mill Farm or RSPB on Thursday 9 August, why not come and talk to Environment Agency staff about the Perry Barr and Witton Flood Risk Management Scheme?

Environment Agency staff will be setting up a stall near the Forge Mill Farm car park on 9 August, from 1pm to 4pm, to talk to local residents and visitors about the progress being made.

The completed scheme will reduce flood risk for 1,400 properties in the area. Phase 2 of the scheme, will provide additional flood storage at Forge Mill in Sandwell Valley, which is upstream of Perry Barr and Witton, and will control the flow of flood water downstream. Park users will have seen construction happening around Forge Mill Farm, at the golf course and along the river side.

Rachel Kelly, Environment Agency Project Manager for the Scheme said:

This is a great opportunity to find out more about what we've been doing so far and we have planned for the coming months. Come and hear more about the scheme, including an additional river crossing providing a circular walking route and environmental enhancements, such as the creation of wet woodland, crassula management (in conjunction with RSPB), tree planting, tree and hedgerow management and creation of new habitats in areas where we are taking material to build the embankment.

The main aspects of this phase include the building of a new embankment, installation of the river outlet and temporarily re-diverting the river.

The scheme, costing just over £32 million, is part of the Environment Agency's programme of £2.6 billion investment into flood defences across the country. The scheme was made possible through funding contributions from Birmingham City Council, Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, Arts Council and crowd-funding.

The first phase of the scheme was completed in spring 2017. Following improvements to the existing upstream flood storage area at Perry Hall Playing Fields, Phase 1 delivered improvement works in Perry Barr and Witton, including wall repairs and wall raising along Brookvale Road, construction of walls along Tame Road and installation of a flood gate at the Atlas Industrial Estate entrance. These measures in isolation do not provide a big enough reduction in flood risk, although they did successfully prevent properties from flooding in May 2018, so Phase 2 will provide the necessary flood water storage during a major flood, such as that experienced in 2007.

Along with flood defences and flood management schemes, knowing your flood risk is also important when protecting your family and property from flooding. People can check their risk and register to receive free flood warnings by visiting our page on [preparing for flooding](#) or calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

Official Statistics: Biofuel statistics: Year 10 (2017 to 2018), report 4

User survey

We previously consulted on changes to the RTFO and have since published the [government response to the consultation](#). Alongside the changes to the RTFO, we are proposing modifications to the quarterly and annual reports and tables. We welcome any comments about our proposals, which is why we are conducting a [user survey](#). This survey will close on 24 August 2018. You can also contact us by the email below.

Statistics on the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation for the year 15 April 2017 to 14 April 2018 (year 10) based on data currently available. This is report 4 of 6 and therefore contains an incomplete dataset for year 10.

The report includes information on the:

- amount of UK road transport fuel from renewable and fossil fuel
- number of Renewable Transport Fuel Certificates (RTFCs) which have been issued to fuel meeting the sustainability requirements
- balance of RTFCs by obligation period
- trades of RTFCs between suppliers and traders
- carbon and sustainability characteristics of the renewable fuel to which RTFCs have been issued
- voluntary scheme data of renewable transport fuel

National Statistics: Historical statistic notices on UK egg production and prices, 2018

This publication gives previously published copies of the quarterly National Statistics publication on egg production, usage and prices that showed figures for 2018. Each publication gives the figures available at that time. The figures are subject to revision each quarter as new information becomes available.

The latest publication and accompanying data sets can be found [here](#).

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