

Press release: Social Security Advisory Committee: Professor Sir Ian Diamond appointed as next Chair

Sir Ian will take up post on 1 August 2018 after the current Chair of the Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC), Paul Gray CB, stands down.

Esther McVey said:

I am delighted to welcome Sir Ian to the role of SSAC Chair. He will bring a wealth of relevant experience and skills to the role. I look forward to working with Sir Ian, and am confident that the committee will continue to provide valuable advice under his leadership.

I would also like to thank the committee's outgoing Chair, Paul Gray CB, for the high quality and constructive support that has been provided to the department over the past 6 years. I wish him every success in his future endeavours when he stands down from the committee in July.

Sir Ian Diamond said:

I am delighted to have been invited to become the next Chair of SSAC, indeed, I consider it to be a privilege. Social security touches on the lives of everyone over the course of a lifetime, therefore the committee has an important responsibility to provide high quality and evidence-based advice to government. I look forward to rising to that challenge, supported by the wealth of talent that already exists within the committee's current membership.

The Social Security Advisory Committee

The [Social Security Advisory Committee](#) is an independent advisory body of the Department for Work and Pensions. The committee's role is to:

- give advice on social security issues
- scrutinise and report on social security regulations (including tax credits)
- consider and advise on any matters referred to it by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions or the Northern Ireland [Department for Communities](#)

The post of SSAC Chair attracts a salary of £22,000 per annum for a time

commitment of at least 5 days per month. Professor Sir Ian Diamond has waived his entitlement to this remuneration.

The [Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments](#) regulates all appointments made by the Secretary of State to the Social Security Advisory Committee. The post of SSAC Chair is subject to pre-appointment scrutiny by the Work and Pensions Select Committee.

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, who was knighted in 2013 for his services to social science and higher education, is the Principal and Vice Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen. He also holds the following non-executive roles:

- Chair of British Universities and Colleges Sport
- Deputy Chair and Chair of the Audit Committee, Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)
- Chair of Department for International Development (DFID) Research Advisory Group
- Trustee, National Centre for Social Research
- Trustee, Iona Cathedral Trust
- Trustee, Population Investigation Committee
- Chair of Edinburgh College of Further Education
- Chair of Plan International UK
- Board Member, UK Research and Innovation
- Board Member, UK Statistics Authority
- Board Member, University of Aberystwyth

Professor Sir Ian Diamond takes up his 5-year appointment as SSAC Chair from 1 August 2018. Current Chair, Paul Gray CB, stands down on 31 July 2018.

Follow DWP on:

[Notice: LE17 4JA, GC Metals Limited: environmental permit issued. EPR/PP3233RS/V002](#)

The Environment Agency publish permits that they issue under the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED).

This decision includes the permit and decision document for:

- Operator name: GC Metals Limited
- Installation name: GC Metals Limited
- Permit number: EPR/PP3233RS/V002

Press release: First events announced for National Democracy Week

The first events to inform, include and inspire have been announced for National Democracy Week.

A series of nationwide events have been announced today as part of the inaugural National Democracy Week, taking place from 2 – 8 July. The events are aimed at inspiring people of all ages and backgrounds to participate in democracy and will be organised by charities and community groups across the country.

This festival of democracy is being held in July to coincide with and celebrate the 90th anniversary of the 1928 Equal Franchise Act – a further historic constitutional milestone which granted equal voting rights to men and women.

Proceedings will kick off on the 2 July in Manchester, with the first ever National Democracy Awards at the People's Museum. The Awards will recognise the exceptional service of those who work tirelessly to increase democratic engagement in the UK.

Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith MP said:

This is a UK-wide festival to celebrate 90 years of equal democratic rights for women and men. I'd encourage everyone to join in National Democracy Week and participate in an activity in their local area. Putting on an event in your local scout hut, school hall or community centre is a great way to celebrate and get your local community involved.

Our democracy should be inclusive of everyone in society. We hope the fantastic events being held around the country will inform, include and inspire people of all backgrounds to participate in our democracy."

During the week, organisations around the country will hold a wide variety of events, including:

- Shout Out UK will host a 'Women In Politics Hackathon' inviting up to 100 young women, including influential figures across parties, to come together and tackle the issue of representation in politics.
- UpRising, the British Red Cross and the Refugee Council are hosting 'Our

Voice', a youth-led event focused on refugee and asylum seeker issues in Birmingham and Bedford.

- Faith Forums for London will deliver a five day Civic and Democracy Leadership Programme equipping young leaders to participate and engage with our Democracy.
- The Patchwork Foundation is hosting an event to promote positive integration of under-represented, deprived and minority communities into British democracy and civil society.

Over 25 events have been confirmed in eight cities throughout the UK and more are being added all the time. Sign up for an event, advertise yours or download our partner pack [here](#).

Further information

The Prime Minister answered a question at Prime Minister's Question Time on 6 June about National Democracy Week. Read the full transcript [here](#).

- National Democracy Week events will take place on a national and local level to encourage members of the public to get involved with our democracy, in particular those from under-registered groups, including young people, BAME groups, British ex-pats, and people with disabilities. Events can be found [here](#).
- The week will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Representation of the People Act 1918 when the first British women over 30 (who met a property qualification) won the right to vote and the 90th anniversary of the Equal Franchise Act 1928 which granted equal voting rights to men and women.
- The week is being delivered in collaboration with the National Democracy Week Council members, the Cabinet Office and partners across the country.
- Follow us on social media at #talkdemocracy.
- You can find out more about National Democracy Week on the website [here](#).
- For further information on National Democracy Week, contact the Cabinet Office Press Office on 0207 276 0436.
- It takes about 5 minutes to register to vote online. To find out more

[visit this page.](#)

[News story: Multi-million pound boost for crop resilience](#)

UK universities and research centres which improve the resilience, sustainability and quality of major crops will benefit from a funding package worth around £5.3 million over five years, Environment Secretary Michael Gove announced today.

The funding will go to four leading agricultural research centres to help develop new technologies and environmentally friendly production for farmers and growers across the country.

They will focus on boosting productivity for pulses, wheat, leafy vegetables and oilseed rape as part of Defra's Crop Genetic Improvement Networks (GINs).

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Developing new technology is crucial to making sure our farmers can continue to grow world-class produce in an environmentally friendly way.

Through this new fund, I hope to see the creation of new and innovative growing practices and crop protections so we can truly unlock the potential of our food and farming industries.

Since their creation in 2003 Defra's GINs have:

- Increased crop resistance to pests and diseases such as orange blossom midge and turnip mosaic virus.
- Enhanced pea crops which are now being used to produce high-quality animal feed.
- The four recipients that will undertake the research are the John Innes Centre, Rothamsted Research, University of Warwick and University of York.

Professor Ian Bancroft, who leads the agricultural research centre at the University of York, said:

We aim to support industry in long-term, sustainable rapeseed production by utilising UK expertise in plant genetics to better understand specific crop traits. Innovation through these networks

is essential if we are to see growth in healthy crop production.

The government has so far invested £160 million through the Agri-Tech Strategy to harness the latest agricultural research and technologies.

[Press release: Households with smaller energy suppliers to benefit from £140 Warm Home Discount on their energy bills](#)

- more smaller energy suppliers will be required to give vulnerable customers, including pensioners, £140 off their winter bills
- energy suppliers with 150,000 customer accounts or more will be obliged to offer the Warm Home Discount
- having more energy suppliers in the £340 million scheme will increase consumer choice and improve switching for vulnerable customers as part of government plans to eradicate fuel poverty

Plans to ensure more of the smaller energy suppliers are obliged to help vulnerable customers under one of the government's flagship schemes to tackle fuel poverty, were outlined today (Friday 15 June) by the Minister for Energy and Clean Growth Claire Perry, following a [consultation](#).

In a move to bring greater fairness to energy prices, lowering the threshold for suppliers to participate in the scheme will mean that 97% of the consumer energy market will be covered. Low income and vulnerable households who get their energy from smaller suppliers will become eligible for the [Warm Home Discount](#), making bills more affordable for around 20,000 more pensioners in 2019/20, and an additional 10,000 pensioners in 2020/21, if the eligibility criteria were to continue in its current form. Extending the eligibility also makes it easier for customers to compare like for like when considering switching.

A stepped approach of lowering the criteria from 250,000 down to 150,000 customer accounts between 2019 and 2021 will ensure that smaller suppliers have enough time to put the right processes in place to take part in the scheme, and reflects the increasing maturity of challengers in the energy retail market.

To reflect this trend, the threshold will be reviewed after 2021 where it could continue to fall, potentially to zero or a small minimum, delivering a level playing field for energy suppliers.

Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry said:

Tackling fuel poverty is a key priority for this government. Everyone who is automatically eligible for the £140 discount on their energy bills each winter should be able to get it. It shouldn't be dependent on which energy supplier they are with, so we want change that.

This is why, as part of our commitment to create an energy market that works for everyone, we are lowering the threshold so more smaller suppliers will be able to offer this lifeline discount to their customers who most need it.

Clean and affordable energy is a central aim of our modern Industrial Strategy, building a Britain fit for the future, creating better, higher-paying jobs in every part of the UK.

The Warm Home Discount provides £140 off winter fuel bills each year. It helps around 2.2 million customers who struggle to meet their energy costs during the coldest months.

Some vulnerable customers are provided with this rebate automatically through data matching. The government intends to further consult on this scheme so that with better data matching, all eligible low-income households are identified to automatically get the discount, rather than having to apply to their suppliers to get it.

Reforming and extending policies on fuel poverty are a key part of the government's commitment to protect low income vulnerable consumers. As outlined in the Industrial Strategy, this includes a recent consultation on changes to the government's energy efficiency scheme to ensure that nearly a million more low-income households are set to benefit from innovative energy saving measures.

A Bill is also currently progressing through Parliament to cap poor value standard variable and default tariffs for 11 million households. This temporary cap will protect consumers, including vulnerable consumers, until effective competition and an energy market that works for everyone is in place.

Ofgem also extended its Safeguard Tariff Cap on pre-payment meter tariffs to protect a further 1 million vulnerable households, bringing the total protected to 5 million households this winter.

1. The Warm Home Discount scheme was launched in April 2011 and has provided assistance with energy costs to over 2 million low income and vulnerable households in Great Britain each year. Since its launch, the scheme has provided over £2 billion of direct assistance to low income and fuel poor households.
2. The government response to the Warm Home Discount consultation states that the threshold for energy suppliers' participation in the scheme

will remain at 250,000 customer accounts this winter. This will be lowered in future years to 200,000 customer accounts in 2019/20 and 150,000 customer accounts in 2020/21. The threshold will be reduced in a phased way to allow smaller suppliers time to prepare while setting a clear signal to the energy retail market.

3. As the spending envelope for the scheme is fixed, lowering the threshold will not mean more low income and vulnerable customers benefitting from the rebate overall, but more suppliers will be obliged to make it available and costs will be spread across more customers.
4. Only the threshold for the core group of the Warm Home Discount scheme will be reduced. This involves automatic rebates through data matching. If the scheme is reformed in 2019/20 to be fully based on consumers automatically getting the entitlement, this reduce in threshold would still apply.
5. Under the current scheme 94% of the market is covered, the move to reduce the threshold will bring this up to 97% (this is based on current numbers and may change in 2019 as the market develops).
6. Other suppliers below the threshold will be able to volunteer under the scheme. There are currently 3 voluntary smaller suppliers.