

Press release: Labour market statistics for Scotland

Commenting on today's labour market statistics for Scotland, Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

It is encouraging that Scotland's unemployment rate has fallen over the year. However, the most recent quarterly snapshot shows an increase of people in Scotland out of work and I urge the Scottish Government to use its considerable powers to strengthen the economy and help create the right conditions for sustained long term employment.

Further information:

- Employment in Scotland decreased by 8,000 over the previous quarter (August-October 2017) and increased by 35,000 over the year to stand at 2,644,000.
- The Scottish employment rate decreased by 0.2 percentage points over the quarter to stand at 74.8%. The rate is below the UK average of 75.3%.
- Unemployment in Scotland increased by 5,000 over the quarter and is down 9,000 over the year. The level now stands at 118,000.
- At 4.3%, the Scots unemployment rate is now in line with that for the UK as a whole (also at 4.3%).
- Economic Activity levels marginally decreased by 4,000 over the quarter and now stands at 2,763,000. The Economic Activity rate is stable over the quarter (0.0 p.p. change) to stand at 78.1%.

Speech: Democracy Launch Event speech

Welcome

Thank you Minister Atkins for those inspiring words. As you have said so clearly, this year is a tremendous opportunity to reflect on how far our democracy has come and the people who made that happen.

Lessons of the Equal Suffrage campaign

Looking back I am struck by the energy and determination of the women and their allies who fought for equal suffrage. They pressed on with their campaign, often in the face of fierce opposition and ridicule, because theirs was a struggle for justice. Their commitment re-shaped our democracy.

Democratic Progress

Since 1918 we have seen our democracy transformed. By 1928 women had finally achieved equal suffrage and the franchise was broadened, with property owning restrictions stripped away.

Fast forward a century and the General Election in 2017 saw the largest ever electoral register, standing at 46.9 million.

The modernisation of our electoral system, including the introduction of individual electoral registration and the launch of the online digital service, has made it easier than ever to make an application to register to vote. 75% of applications are now made online, but for young people this is closer to 100%.

Future Challenges

As Minister for the Constitution I am aware of how much has been achieved but also of the distance still to travel. I want to open up, protect and improve our democracy.

National Democracy Week

So, in this Suffrage Centenary year, our inaugural National Democracy Week will kick off on Monday 2 July through to 8 July 2018, the 90th anniversary of the 1928 Equal Franchise Act which gave women the same voting rights as men.

National Democracy Week is being delivered in collaboration with NDW Council members, Cabinet Office and our combined extended networks. National Democracy Week is an opportunity to use all of our experience, insight and passion to increase democratic participation. We believe that regardless of who we are or where we are from, we must work together to ensure that every member of society has an equal chance to participate in our democracy and to have their say.

Together we will deliver a range of democratic engagement activities in the lead up to and during the week.

Our aim will be to get results. To increase understanding of how to take part in decision making, and also to grow those who say they are more likely to participate. I want to do this across the whole UK.

I would like to thank the National Democracy Week Council for their time and

commitment so far. They have been working with Cabinet Office to produce our new branding, which you can see around the room today and features real people our Council works with every day.

Parliamentarian Pack Launch

Parliamentarians are at the forefront of our democracy, the embodiment of the principle of representation and a vital connection between people and parliament. In recognition of this unique role, I am delighted to launch this new toolkit to support the crucial work that you do to promote our democracy amongst young people.

Many of you will have been inspired at an early age to explore how you make your voice heard on issues that are important to you. For many, their first awareness of politics and how decisions are made comes from contact with their local representative, in schools, youth clubs and other extracurricular activities.

It is a prime opportunity for engagement which can have a lasting effect on our young citizens' understanding of our electoral system and how it works for them. I ask you to join me in making use of this new resource throughout the year designed to make your interactions with young people effective and powerful.

Awards – Nominations Open

The National Democracy Week Council have also helped determine the categories for the National Democracy Week awards, which I am very excited to announce today.

We know that individuals and organisations across the UK are working tirelessly to engage people in our democracy. Their work, particularly with under represented groups, has the potential to help people understand their democratic rights and make their voices heard. This service is not always recognised, but as part of this summer's festival of democracy, I want to acknowledge the great contributions that so many have made.

The categories, as determined by the National Democracy Week Council, are:

- Young Advocate of the Year Award
- Diversity Champion of the Year Award
- Changemaker of the Year Award and
- Collaboration of the Year Award

So please, if you know of a young person who champions democracy, someone who is committed to ensuring diversity, if you have been blown away by the change that an individual, project or organisation has driven, or there is a partnership you feel breaks new ground, make sure you nominate them through our new National Democracy Week website www.gov.uk/nationaldemocracyweek. Nominations will close 5pm Sunday 27 May and we will hold an Award ceremony during National Democracy Week.

Our democracy should be as inclusive as possible – let's celebrate those who are rising to this challenge. Let us also each commit to do our bit to engage others, during National Democracy Week and beyond. I am delighted to introduce my colleague, Andrea Leadsom MP, Leader of the House of Commons, who will talk further about the Parliamentary Pack and how it can help with that task.

[Press release: National Democracy Week Awards announced to mark suffrage centenary](#)

The Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith, announced the awards in Parliament today, which will recognise national leaders in the area of democratic engagement.

National nominations will be divided into four categories:

- Young Advocate of the Year Award
- Diversity Champion of the Year Award
- Changemaker of the Year Award
- Collaboration of the Year Award

The Awards, held in the 100th year of the first women getting the right to vote, will highlight the work of national leaders in democratic engagement. Anyone may nominate any individual, organisation or group and nominations close on 27 May 2018.

Activities will be held over National Democracy Week and from today, organisations and members of the public will be able to upload their events to the website.

Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith MP, said:

The Democracy Awards will recognise outstanding achievements in democratic engagement and the Suffrage Centenary is a great opportunity to highlight the work so many people are doing in this area, often without reward.

I encourage you all to nominate someone who you believe deserves to be recognised for their work in championing or improving society's relationship with democracy. I am looking forward to celebrating all of the people who are going above and beyond to promote one of our most cherished assets.

Chief Executive of YMCA England & Wales, Denise Hatton said:

Young people have a huge role to play in democracy and it is important that we get them involved as early as possible.

By being involved in events taking place across National Democracy Week, young people can get a taste of the democratic process which will give them the understanding they need to actively participate in society and engage in their local communities.

There are many young people across the country already in leadership roles, engaging and changing the world around them. National Democracy Week will bring together organisations who work all year round to support young people with civic engagement and will act as a focal point for other young people to get involved.

YMCA are proud to be supporting this week and will be running activities across the country, enabling young people to shape their communities and partake in society.

[Press release: North East man fined for running illegal scrapyards](#)

A man has been fined for running an illegal scrapyards in Teesside.

Anthony Hanley, 34, of Marton Burn Road in Middlesbrough, appeared at Teesside Magistrates' Court on Tuesday 20 March where he pleaded guilty to two charges of operating a scrapyards without a permit.

He was fined £800, ordered to pay costs of £4,000 and a victim surcharge of £80.

Prosecuting on behalf of the Environment Agency, Simon Crowder told the court that Hanley is the owner of Cliffs Autos which deals with end of life vehicles.

To take end of life scrap vehicles on to a site, the operators need an environmental permit for disposal of vehicle waste to ensure no risk to the environment by preventing fluids from going into the ground or into drainage systems.

Illegal site

On 25 August 2016 Environment Agency officers attended the illegal site at King George Terrace in Middlesbrough where they saw a sign offering to buy

vehicles 'dead or alive', leading them to believe Hanley wanted to buy scrap vehicles.

Officers noticed there was in excess of 30 end of life vehicles stored at the premises. The defendant was co-operative with officers and was told to clear the site within 28 days.

On 12 September the same year, officers returned to the site and saw the number of vehicles had now reduced, and a further visit in December saw the site had been cleared.

But on 7 April 2017, the two Environment Agency officers returned to the site to see it had resumed operation again, with in excess of 30 end of life vehicles present, with some leaking fluids on to the ground.

Illegal sites 'impact on the environment'

Rachael Caldwell, Enforcement Team Leader at the Environment Agency said:

Hanley was given the opportunity to clear the vehicles of waste but when we returned to check the site it was full again.

Environmental permits are needed for a reason – they ensure operators have the correct procedures and equipment in place to protect the environment.

Not only do illegal sites impact on the environment but they undermine legitimate businesses. Every day our officers are out on the ground identifying illegal waste sites and taking the necessary action.

To report an illegal waste site contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

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