

[Green Party Animal spokesperson welcomes vote to #EndTheCageAge for caged rabbits](#)



14 March 2017

Keith Taylor MEP: “This is great news for millions of rabbits across Europe and a great example of how the EU can take a lead on animal welfare. Greens have always opposed factory farming and I wholeheartedly welcome the result of today’s vote.”

Green Party Animals spokesperson Keith Taylor MEP is welcoming the vote to #EndTheCageAge for farmed rabbits across Europe. The MEP for the South East was among a majority of MEPs who voted to support a report calling for the practice to be outlawed at the European Parliament plenary session in [Strasbourg this afternoon](#). More than 4,000 people across the South East had contacted their MEPs calling for action.

Rabbits are the fourth most farmed animal in the world. An estimated 340 million rabbits are slaughtered annually after a life kept in barren wire cages where their natural behaviour is severely restricted. Many scientists have called for the cage system to be urgently replaced by one which allows for the natural needs of rabbits to be better taken into account.

The report adopted by MEPs calls for higher welfare standards for rabbits and concrete legislation that would ban the use of cages. Responding to the result, Keith said:

“This is great news for millions of rabbits across Europe and a great example of how the EU can take a lead on animal welfare. Greens have always opposed factory farming and as the Green Party’s Animals spokesperson I wholeheartedly welcome the result of today’s vote. The report prioritises putting an end to the inhumane conditions in which rabbits are kept and eradicating the other problems associated intensive rabbit rearing. The current system leads to the spread of disease and the subsequent overuse of antibiotics.”

“Rabbit farming is relatively small-scale in the UK, but the fact that the European Parliament has voted to end the cage age serves to highlight the key role EU membership has played and continues to play in raising the welfare of millions of farm animals in Britain and across the EU.”

“The closer the relationship the UK maintains with the EU, retaining animal welfare and wildlife protections through single market membership, the better the outcome for British animals. Animal advocates across the UK must continue lobbying the UK government to ensure the current legal protections, for all species, offered by European Union membership are maintained and

strengthened.”

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BCC Economic Forecast: UK growth upgraded for 2017 but to remain flat in the medium-term

Today the BCC releases its latest latest economic forecast.

14th March 2017

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) has today (Tuesday) upgraded its UK GDP growth forecast for 2017 from 1.1% to 1.4%. However, it has downgraded its expectations slightly for 2018 from 1.4% to 1.3%, and published its first forecast for 2019 of 1.5% growth.

The leading business group upgraded its growth forecast for 2017, driven by an upward revision to UK GDP growth data in the final quarter of 2016, and stronger than expected levels of consumer spending. There has also been a slight improvement in the outlook for investment and trade, compared to our previous forecast.

However, economic growth is expected to remain well below its long-term average over the forecast period.

Inflation is forecast to breach the Bank of England's 2% target this quarter, with companies facing higher input costs, which will be passed through to consumers. While average earnings are expected to hold steady, the inflationary pressures are likely to erode real wages. As a result, consumer spending, a driving force of growth in the economy in recent years, is expected to slow substantially.

The UK's net trade position is expected to improve over the next few years. Investment is forecast to contract this year, with subdued growth predicted in the following years, as uncertainties relating to the outcomes of the UK's negotiations with the EU persist, and increasing input costs and taxes hit businesses.

In this period of uncertainty, there are heightened risks to the forecast. Faster levels of inflation and increased anxiety around the Brexit

negotiations could result in more muted growth, however if resilience in consumer spending continues, growth levels could be bolstered.

Key points in the forecast:

- **UK GDP growth forecast for 2017 is upgraded to 1.4%, but is expected to slow to 1.3% in 2018, before accelerating slightly to 1.5% in 2019. Growth of 0.4% is expected in Q1 2017**
- **The improved growth forecast for 2017 is driven primarily by stronger than expected household consumption and ONS revisions to Q4 GDP data. GDP growth forecast for 2018 has been downgraded slightly from 1.4% to 1.3%, with consumer spending expected to weaken**
- **The pace of inflation has picked up faster than expected and is forecast to breach the Bank of England's 2% target early this year, growing by 2.4% in 2017, 2.7% in 2018 before slowing to 2.5% in 2019. This is higher than the previous forecast of 2.1% and 2.4% for 2017 and 2018 respectively**
- **Consumer spending is expected to slow substantially from 1.6% in 2017, to 0.9% in 2018 and 1.1% in 2019 as inflationary pressures erode real wages**
- **Business investment is expected to contract by 0.5% in 2017, before growth levels of 0.2% in 2018 and 1.0% in 2019**
- **Export growth has been upgraded from 2.3% to 2.7% in 2017, and from 2.9% to 3.1% in 2018, and is expected to be 2.8% in 2019.**
- **Looking at sectors, construction has been upgraded from -2.0% for 2017 to 0.4% and is expected to grow by 0.2% in 2018 and 1.0% in 2019. The services sector is expected to grow by 1.9% in 2017, 1.5% in 2018 and 1.7% in 2019. Manufacturing is to grow by 1.2%, 0.7% and 1.0% respectively.**
- **The main downside risk to our forecast is if inflation rises by more than we currently predict which would be a further squeeze on consumer spending and business investment. The upside risk is if consumer spending current resilience continues. Under this scenario, our expectations for GDP growth would be substantially higher.**

Dr Adam Marshall, Director General of the BCC, said:

"Thanks to the hard work of businesses and the continued resilience of the redoubtable British consumer, the U.K. economy is likely to grow somewhat more strongly than we'd previously expected during 2017.

"Yet with several years of unspectacular growth ahead, coupled with inflationary pressures and the uncertain outcome of Brexit negotiations, it has never been more important to tackle the long-standing constraints that limit business confidence and growth here at home.

"Last week's Budget was a missed opportunity for the government to double down on infrastructure improvements and support for international trade, and to lower the heavy up-front taxes and costs that undermine business investment. More thoughtful and radical moves to improve the business environment would give businesses – and GDP forecasts – a boost during a critical and complex time."

Suren Thiru, Head of Economics at the BCC, said:

“We have upgraded our growth forecast for 2017, driven by revisions to official GDP data and a stronger than expected end to 2016 for the UK economy.

“That said, the UK economy is still set to enter a more subdued period, with growth expected to remain materially below trend over the near term. The resilience in consumer spending, a key driver of UK growth, will slowly dissipate over the coming months as higher inflation and muted wage growth combine to erode consumer spending power.

“The UK’s trade position will improve across the forecast period supported by the depreciation of Sterling and an improving outlook for the global economy.

“The imbalances in the economy continue to leave the UK increasingly exposed to economic shocks. While household consumption’s contribution to UK GDP growth is likely to decrease over the near term, the slight improvement in investment and trade prospects over the same period is not expected to be enough to prevent a slowdown in overall growth.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

As with all economic forecasts, further material changes to our forecast are possible.

Dr Adam Marshall, Director General, and Suren Thiru, Head of Economics, are available for interview.

A full copy of the forecast is available from the BCC press office.

The British Chambers of Commerce’s Quarterly Economic Forecast is run in partnership with Cambridge Econometrics.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: www.britishchambers.org.uk

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[News story: Veterans UK Customer Satisfaction Survey 2017](#)

At Veterans UK (part of Defence Business Services) we are always trying to improve the services we deliver to our customers. One of the best ways to understand how we can make improvements is to ask the people who use our services how we can do better.

If you would like to tell us about your experiences, please complete our [Customer Satisfaction Survey 2017](#)

For more information on the services we deliver and how you can contact us, please see [Veterans UK](#).

[Sturgeon's indyref2 call 'utterly irresponsible'](#)

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13 Mar 2017



Nicola Sturgeon's decision to hold another independence referendum has been branded "utterly irresponsible" by Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson.

Earlier today the First Minister announced she wanted to hold a second independence referendum next year.

This is despite previously saying she would only do so if the majority of Scots wanted another vote, and that it was a "once in a generation" decision.

Repeated polling has shown not only opposition to independence, but widespread objection to another referendum.

Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:

"Nicola Sturgeon has today given up acting as First Minister for all of

Scotland.

“People have said time and again they do not want to go back to the division of a second referendum.

“Nicola Sturgeon promised the 2014 referendum would be ‘once in a generation’.

“Today she has ignored the majority in Scotland who do not want a referendum and has decided instead to double down on division and uncertainty.

“The First Minister’s proposal offers Scotland the worst of all worlds. Her timetable would force people to vote blind on the biggest political decision a country could face.

“This is utterly irresponsible and has been taken by the First Minister purely for partisan political reasons.

“Both No and Yes voters have been urging her to put this to one side – but because of her own rash decision to use Brexit in a bid to lever support for independence, she has ignored them completely.

“Quite simply, today the First Minister has failed in her job to act in the interests of all of us.”

BCC Launches Chamber Business Awards at London Stock Exchange

The British Chambers today launches the Chamber Business Awards at the London Stock Exchange.

13 March 2017

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) has today launched its flagship Chamber Business Awards at London Stock Exchange. Scientifica, last year’s winner of the ‘Business of the Year’ award based in Sussex, had the honour of opening trading at London Stock Exchange, accompanied by Nus Ghani, Conservative MP for Wealden, and Ana Christie, Chief Executive of Sussex Chambers of Commerce.

The prestigious competition is one of the showpiece events in the business calendar, recognising and promoting the best of British business through a series of regional heats, culminating in a Gala Awards Dinner, which will take place at the Brewery, London on 30 November.

Entries open today and will run until Friday 30 June. Next year’s winners of

the Business of the Year award will have the same chance to open the market at London Stock Exchange as a prize, a rare opportunity for a private business.

Companies can enter nine categories, covering exports, small business, people development, technology, high-growth, customer service, partnerships with the education sector, social media, and health and wellbeing.

Francis Martin, President of the British Chambers of Commerce said:

“Businesses are the driving force of the UK economy, creating jobs, growth and prosperity, and helping Britain to maintain its reputation internationally. This is exactly why it is important for us to recognise and celebrate the contribution they make to their local communities and the wider economy.”

“The broad spread of categories in the Chamber Business Awards reflects both the diversity of industries and skills of British firms, and the range of achievements and projects that they have been involved with.”

“Each time I visit Chamber member businesses, it is inspiring to see so many companies finding innovative ways to grow their business in every corner of the UK. The Awards acknowledge the relentless efforts of these businesses and their talented employees.”

Adrian Corbin of Scientifica, Winner of the ‘Business of the Year’ award last year, said:

“Everyone at Scientifica is incredibly proud that the company won the British Chambers of Commerce Business of the Year. It is an enormous achievement and a fitting testimony to all the hard work that has gone into creating such a great company.”

“We are at the forefront of high-tech British manufacturing, exporting our products to more than forty countries worldwide. We employ a highly-educated and international workforce who are all committed to producing innovative products to help further neuroscience research, and the winning of this award will undoubtedly help us expand into even more markets around the world.”

Umerah Akram, Head of ELITE UK, said:

“Ensuring the best of Britain’s innovative, imaginative and inspiring businesses can flourish in the UK is a priority for London Stock Exchange Group which is why we are proud to support the BCC Chamber Business Awards. Through ELITE, our unique business support and capital raising programme, we are creating a dynamic financial and entrepreneurial ecosystem, promoting the right type of funding for ambitious businesses at every stage of their growth journey.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

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