

# **This White Paper is a wish list, not an action plan – Keir Starmer**

**Keir**

**Starmer MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the EU**, speaking after the release of the Government's Brexit White Paper, said:

"Today's White Paper is indicative of the Government's whole approach to Brexit.

"For months they have refused to publish a plan or allow proper scrutiny, and when they are finally forced to produce a White Paper it is rushed, limited and not well thought through.

"The White Paper offers no certainty for EU citizens living in the UK, no additional detail on how workers' and consumer rights will be protected, and nothing on how full tariff-free access to the single market will be delivered.

"It's a wish list, not an action plan.

"Labour has said throughout that there needs to be accountability and scrutiny throughout the Brexit process.

"Next week we will debate amendments to the Article 50 Bill that would achieve that – in particular by guaranteeing a meaningful vote that ensures our Parliament votes on the Article 50 deal before the European Parliament does. The Government should welcome that, not reject it".

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## **Sarah Champion responds to Government's failure to provide assurances on funding for revenge porn**

# helpline

**Sarah Champion MP, Labour's Shadow**

**Secretary of State for Women and Equalities**, responding

to the Government's failure to provide assurances that it will continue to fund

the national revenge porn helpline, said:

"Once again, the Tories are all talk but no action when protecting women and girls from violence.

"The revenge porn helpline is an invaluable resource for victims who are desperate to receive advice on how to have indecent images removed from the internet and how to pursue a prosecution if they so choose.

"Coming forward as a survivor of revenge porn takes such bravery and we need to send the message that those victims will be supported in every way possible.

"Labour is urging the Government to maintain this vital, value-for-money service. Ministers must now clarify and publish their continued funding arrangements for the helpline."

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## Debbie Abrahams responds to Government's 'Fuller Working Lives' strategy

**Debbie Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow Work and**

**Pensions Secretary**, commenting

on the Government's 'Fuller Working Lives' strategy, said:

"It's right that the Government is taking steps to boost employment for older people.

"However, more than half a million workers aged over 50 rely on in-work support – and that support is at risk of being rolled back through Universal Credit.

"That's why Labour is calling on the Tories to reverse cuts to Universal Credit, which could see some older

workers  
worse off by £2,600 a year.”

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## News story: Sir Mark Walport will lead UK Research and Innovation

In this role Sir Mark will lead the establishment of UKRI and ensure it plays a central role at the heart of the Industrial Strategy.

Subject to the passage of the [Higher Education and Research Bill](#) through parliament, UKRI will be established as a single, strategic body that will bring together the 7 Research Councils, Innovate UK and the research and knowledge exchange functions of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation Jo Johnson said:

I am delighted that Mark has agreed to take on this pivotal role. With his experience of running a large scale research organisation, collaboration with businesses in all sectors and his work at the heart of government, Mark is uniquely placed to lead the establishment of UKRI and ensure the organisation becomes a major voice for UK research and innovation.

Following his appointment Mark will now work closely with the UKRI Chair Sir John Kingman and the research and innovation communities across the UK to shape the new organisation over the coming months, delivering on the Industrial Strategy proposals for investing in science, research and innovation in the UK.

UKRI Chief Executive Designate Prof Sir Mark Walport said:

I am honoured to be appointed as the first Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). My ambition is to make UKRI the world's leading research and innovation public funding agency.

I look forward to working closely with the Research Councils, Innovate UK and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) as we work together to create UKRI. I also look forward to working closely with all of our research and innovation communities to provide a strong and coherent voice for UK science and innovation.

UKRI Non-Executive Chair Sir John Kingman said:

I have worked closely with Mark over many years; he is a superb scientific leader who believes passionately in the potential for great science and innovation to make a profound difference to society and to the economy. He is the ideal first leader for UKRI.

## **Detail on UKRI**

Science, research and innovation are key strengths of the UK; vital underpinning elements of our economy and national wellbeing. The UK research and innovation system is world-leading, but there is an opportunity to make it even more effective.

The purpose of Part 3 of the Higher Education and Research Bill is to put in place the legal powers and safeguards that will enable government to protect the UK's status as a full-spectrum scientific power in the future. The proposals before parliament are to create UKRI, a strong, agile and joined up funder of research and innovation for the UK.

Through UKRI, we are implementing the recommendations of Nobel Prize winning scientist Sir Paul Nurse, who the government asked to lead a review of the UK's research landscape. In his report, published in November 2015, Sir Paul called on government to "support the Research Councils to collectively make up more than the sum of their parts", and develop a "smoother pathway to more applied research".

Subject to the passage of the Higher Education and Research Bill through parliament, UKRI will include the 7 Research Councils, Innovate UK and the research and knowledge exchange functions of HEFCE. This will create a single strategic research and innovation funding body, which will build on and protect the strengths and values of the current system.

UKRI will deliver a strengthened strategic approach to future challenges and a maximisation of the value and benefit from government's investment of over £6 billion per annum in research and innovation. It will provide a greater focus on cross-cutting issues that are outside the core remits of the current funding bodies, such as multi- and inter-disciplinary research, enabling the system to respond rapidly and effectively to current and future challenges. It will be a strengthened, unified voice for the UK's research and innovation funding system, facilitating the dialogue with government and partners on the global stage. Furthermore, it will create a smoother pathway for innovation, enabling improved collaboration between businesses and researchers and better alignment of research outputs with business needs.

- [Letter from Sir Mark Walport to partner organisations.](#) (PDF, 79.7KB, 2 pages)

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# SNP priced out of function room hire... by the SNP

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2 Feb 2017



The SNP's business rates hike has been slammed by its own party, after a nationalist north east branch was priced out of a hotel it's been using since the 1970s.

The Banff Springs Hotel in Aberdeenshire has been hit with a £50,000 rates rise thanks to Scottish Government changes.

As a result, it's been forced to pass on that additional cost to customers, or face going out of business.

And now it's emerged the Banff and Macduff branch of the SNP is one of those customers refusing to pay the increased rate.

It told the hotel: "The increase in hire fee is excessive to say the least. Should this apply ... I can confirm there will be no further booking and our business will be taken elsewhere."

The embarrassing revelation was raised at First Minister's Questions by Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson, as she attacked the SNP on its increasing of business taxes.

That move, along with income tax hits to be announced in the budget later, makes Scotland the highest-taxed part of the UK.

However, instead of addressing the concerns shared by her north east branch, she merely said the hotel would have an opportunity appeal the rise.

**Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson said:**

"Even the SNP's own branches are opposing the hike in business rates, so perhaps it's time for Nicola Sturgeon to listen.

"These unfair increases, which see businesses like the Banff Springs Hotel paying more than double their current rates, could force closures and job losses.

"The SNP won't listen to reason or hard evidence, so perhaps it will take

notice now it's been embarrassed in the Scottish Parliament.

"If the First Minister's own party doesn't support this policy, surely even she recognises it's time to do something about it."

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**To see the letter of complaint by the SNP Banff branch, visit:**

**<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Hotel-complaint.jpg>**

**The SNP organisation has been using the hotel since 1976:**

**<https://www.facebook.com/BanffandMacduff/posts/1104255902998301>**