

The results of this survey expose the failure of our privatised railways – Andy McDonald

Andy McDonald MP, Labour's Shadow Transport Secretary, commenting on the publication of Transport Focus' National Rail Passenger Survey, revealing significant declines in passenger satisfaction for 2016, said:

"The results of this survey expose the failure of our privatised railways. With promised upgrades delayed or cancelled and fares rising way ahead of wages, it's disappointing but not surprising to see passenger satisfaction down across the board for 2016.

"With this decline in passenger satisfaction, it's becoming more difficult for the Government to justify allowing private and foreign state-owned companies to take money out of the system that should be used to improve services or hold fares down.

"It's clear that an alternative is needed for Britain's railways. It is time for our railways to be run under public ownership, in the public interest as an integrated national asset in public hands with affordable fares for all and long-term investment in the railway network."

China encourages college grads to work in grassroots

The central government has issued a guideline to encourage more college graduates to work at the community level.

The guideline, which was jointly issued by the General Office of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, and the General Office of the State Council, has been designed to involve college graduates in economic and social development.

College graduates will be encouraged to find employment in the modern seed industry, agrotechny, countryside tourism, rural e-commerce, rural cooperatives and water conservation projects, according to the guideline.

The guideline says college graduates will be encouraged to work in the middle and western parts of the country, the northeast China and other less-developed and remote areas.

Graduates will also be encouraged to join the army with preferential policies.

The guideline says college graduates will be encouraged to work for small- and medium-sized enterprises, or start their own businesses.

To be attractive to graduates, companies must offer good training programs as well as higher wages and allowances, according to the guideline.

The guideline stipulates that civil servant recruitment in provincial-level agencies will only consider candidates with at least two years of grassroots working experience.

The government estimates that about 7.95 million college students will graduate this year, accounting for over a half of newly-added urban labor force.

Press release: Integrating the Science and Technology Support for the UK's Defence and Security

An integration has been agreed between the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) and the Home Office's Centre for Applied Science and Technology (CAST). This has been decided following a review to examine the best way to provide enduring and appropriate science and technology (S&T) support to the Home Office and the MOD. The integration will improve the resilience of the S&T support that makes such a major contribution to the nation's defence, policing, security and resilience.

Commenting on today's announcement, Dstl's Chief Executive, Jonathan Lyle said:

Combining our capabilities will improve the science and technology support for the MOD and Home Office, and enhance the nation's defence and security. Dstl and CAST already work closely together on key projects such as forensics, body armour and detection

systems. We intend to continue to build on this existing close relationship to make the integration process a success.

The Head of CAST, Andy Bell, added:

This development will enable a more joined-up, coherent approach to science and technology provision for security, policing and resilience in the UK. The move will mean that our customers have access to a wider range of scientific and engineering expertise across government, industry and academia, giving broader access to innovative ideas and solutions. There is a lot of hard work to be undertaken before we complete the move, and we will be providing full support to our staff throughout the transition.

The integration is expected to start in 2017 and end by 2020. CAST's staff and work will move to become part of Dstl, and be primarily based at Porton Down, near Salisbury. An integration programme team will work jointly across Dstl and CAST to support the transfer of staff and capabilities during the transition period, ensuring continuity in support of national security, defence and policy.

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[The Government has today been forced by the Supreme Court to accept the sovereignty of Parliament – Jeremy Corbyn](#)

Jeremy

Corbyn MP, Leader of the Labour Party, responding to this morning's judgment from the Supreme Court that Parliament must give its approval to trigger the

process of leaving the EU, said:

“The Government has today been forced by the Supreme Court to accept the sovereignty of Parliament.

“Labour respects the result of the referendum and the will of the British people and will not frustrate the process for invoking Article 50.

“However, Labour will seek to amend the Article 50 Bill to prevent the Conservatives using Brexit to turn Britain into a bargain basement tax haven off the coast of Europe.

“Labour is demanding a plan from the Government to ensure it is accountable to Parliament throughout the negotiations and a meaningful vote to ensure the final deal is given Parliamentary approval.”

Press release: Rogue recycler found guilty for mattress mountain

The operator of a waste mattress and bed recycling site in Smarden has been found guilty for failing to comply with relevant waste exemptions as well as failing to comply with an Enforcement Notice issued by the Environment Agency. Sentencing is due on 3 February 2017.

The charges were brought against Mr Lewis Bertram, trading as Eco Matters, Units Y & E2 Smarden Business Estate, Smarden, Ashford, Kent after an Environment Agency investigation discovered that he was operating outside of the terms of registered waste exemptions, posing a pollution and fire risk to the surrounding environment, neighbouring units and residential properties. Mr Bertram pleaded not guilty to the charges presented at Magistrates court early in 2016 and elected for the case to be heard at Crown Court. The jury returned guilty pleas to all three charges brought before the court.

Mr Bertram had been operating a mattress recycling business at the two units, which lie within close proximity to several residential properties, since July 2013. Environment Agency visits in December 2014 and January 2015 found that the activities were not compliant with the terms of the registered waste exemptions. Environment officers informed Mr Bertram that he was committing an offence by operating the site outside of the terms of these waste exemptions and gave Mr Bertram the opportunity to comply with the specific

conditions and relevant objectives in the first instance.

Further visits to monitor the situation on site in March and early April 2015 revealed that activities on site were continuing to be conducted outside of the terms of the exemptions and the volume of waste stored on site continued to increase. The Environment Agency de-registered the waste exemptions and Enforcement Notices were issued on Mr Bertram in March 2015 instructing that all waste be removed from Unit E2 and the volume of waste at Unit Y to be reduced to the 1,000 tonne limit of textiles permitted for storage under the waste exemptions by 29 May 2015.

Mr Bertram maintained a not guilty plea in relation to the non-compliance with these two notices to clear the waste for which the charges will be referred back to a magistrate's court.

No further waste had been brought to site by Mr Bertram since the de-registration of the exemptions in May 2015. However, further visits to the site conducted by environment officers in June 2015 revealed that Mr Bertram had not complied with the Enforcement Notices requesting for the removal of waste from site.

The Environment Agency worked closely with Kent Fire and Rescue Service throughout 2015 and 2016 to monitor the fire risk posed by the site and to ensure that the situation on site did not get any worse.

The site at Units Y and E2 are still full of waste mattresses, divan bed bases and their associated parts which we will continue to deal with to ensure that they are removed by those responsible.

Alan Cansdale, Environment Manager from the Environment Agency said:

His actions showed blatant disregard for local residents and businesses putting the environment and local amenity at risk. Mr Bertram ignored numerous opportunities given to him by our officers to bring the operations back into compliance.

Waste exemptions are designed for activities deemed to be of low risk to the environment and have strict conditions that must be complied with.

While we will work closely with businesses to help them comply with such legislation, in cases where individuals consistently operate illegally and in this case outside the terms of an exemption, we have no hesitation in prosecuting them to make sure that waste crime doesn't pay.

There are photos available on our [flickr account](#)