

Press release: The Planning Inspectorate publishes its 2017/18 Annual Report and Accounts

Today (12 July 2018), The Planning Inspectorate published its [Annual Report for 2017/18](#). The report shows that all targets were met in Wales and a continuing improvement in performance in England but acknowledges there is more to be done to meet customer expectations of the time taken to process some appeals.

Key points from the report include:

- The need to change and adapt to meet customers, stakeholders and staff expectations
- Investing to provide excellent customer service and tackle timeliness in dealing with hearings and inquiries in England
- Improved financial performance
- Casework performance in Wales exceeded targets
- Casework performance in England is improving but fell short of expectations partly due to an unexpected 13% increase in caseload
- All Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) applications determined within statutory timetables
- An increase in Local Plan examinations

Sarah Richards, Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate said: " We are continuing to change and adapt to improve the time it takes to determine appeals and meet our customers' expectations. Changing our processes and IT systems takes time and we must do this without jeopardising our delivery of quality decisions in an open, fair, and impartial manner."

Sarah added: "A key foundation of our Transformation programme is ensuring our customers receive the service they deserve and to ensure our processes support the Government's objective to build the homes and infrastructure the country needs."

Ends

Journalists wanting further information should contact the Planning Inspectorate Press Office, on: 0303 444 5004 or 0303 444 5005 or email: pressoffice@pins.gsi.gov.uk

[News story: Victoria and Albert Museum appointment](#)

Kavita Puri

Kavita Puri is an award-winning journalist and radio broadcaster. In her landmark three-part series *Partition Voices* for BBC Radio 4, she documented the untold stories of Colonial British and British Asians who lived through the Partition of India 70 years ago, and assessed its legacy in Britain today. The programmes won the Royal Historical Society's Radio and Podcast Award and its overall Public History Prize. The testimonies are being archived by the British Library Sound Archive. Her book based on the BBC series is due out in 2019. Her two critically-acclaimed Radio 4 series, *Three Pounds in My Pocket*, charted the migration of South Asians to post-war Britain, and she writes and lectures on these subjects.

Kavita works for BBC Current Affairs as the editor of *Our World*, a foreign affairs documentary programme. Recent awards for its coverage include the Royal Television Society and the Foreign Press Association and she was named Journalist of the Year by the Asian Media Awards. Prior to this, Kavita worked at *Newsnight* as a political producer, film producer and assistant editor. She studied Law at Cambridge University.

The role is not remunerated. This appointment has been made in accordance with the [Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Under the Code, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election. Kavita has declared no such political activity.

[News story: Written Ministerial Statement: Media Matters](#)

Having taken over as the Secretary of State with responsibility for media public interest cases I have reviewed the process regarding the proposed merger between 21st Century Fox (21CF) and Sky Plc (Sky). I am content that DCMS and the relevant parties have ensured a scrupulously clear, fair and transparent process and I can now therefore inform the House of the final decisions made by my predecessor as Secretary of State. These decisions were made in a quasi-judicial capacity.

On 5 June the previous Secretary of State made a statement to the House in

which he set out his decision in relation to the proposed merger.

He announced that having considered the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) report, he agreed with their findings on the public interest grounds and their finding that undertakings to divest Sky News to The Walt Disney Company (Disney) or to an alternative suitable buyer could potentially remedy the public interest concerns identified.

Following the completion of discussions with the parties, on 19 June he published a consultation on the undertakings offered by 21CF along with new undertakings offered by Disney for the divestment of Sky News to Disney and several associated documents.

We received five responses to the consultation, which closed on 4 July. These responses will be published today on the DCMS website, along with the government's response to the consultation.

Having considered the responses to the consultation, the previous Secretary of State agreed with the parties a clarificatory change to Disney's undertakings and changes to the associated brand licensing agreement. In response to specific concerns raised by respondents, he also agreed that where appropriate the Secretary of State will consult with the CMA in relation to these undertakings and will publish the formal written advice given by the CMA. I am content to confirm this position.

The final version of the undertakings have been published along with the other relevant documents on the DCMS website.

The publication of the undertakings marks the final stage of the public interest consideration of this case. It is right that Ofcom, the CMA and my Department have taken such care in ensuring the bid is properly and effectively scrutinised. It is now a matter for the Sky shareholders to decide whether to accept 21CF's bid.

Press release: Minister for the Middle East travels to the US and Saudi Arabia

During his visit to Washington he will meet with senior US policymakers working on the Middle East and North Africa, including members of the House and Senate Foreign Affairs and Relations Committees. Mr Burt will also participate in a meeting with the House Foreign Affairs Committee alongside Ambassadors from Germany and France on Iran and wider Middle East issues.

In Riyadh, Mr Burt will meet with Ministers from the Saudi Ministry of

Foreign Affairs, the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Foreign Minister of Yemen.

Speaking ahead of the visit, Mr Burt said:

As the President of the United States makes his first official visit to the UK, my meetings in Washington are emblematic of the of the breadth and depth of the cooperation between our two countries, not least on Middle East and North Africa issues. Over the last few months we have worked together both bilaterally and through international organisations to address the situations in Syria and Yemen, our troops continue to fight together against the scourge of Daesh, and our aid organisations cooperate at every level.

In Riyadh I will be discussing the full range of issues impacting the Middle East region, both with my Saudi counterparts and with the Foreign Minister of Yemen. Together we will reinforce that there can be no military solution to the crisis in Yemen, and we will discuss how best to work with UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths to achieve a political solution.

Further information

- Follow the Alistair Burt on Twitter [@AlistairBurtUK](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
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News story: £700 million South West food exports are vital to economic success

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Liz Truss used a visit to several food manufacturers in Cornwall this week (12 and 13 July 2018) to unveil new figures that showed food and agricultural exports in the first quarter of 2018 were up for the fourth year in a row.

From January to March 2018, £175 million worth of food and agricultural goods were exported from the region around the globe, up £10 million on last year.

In 2017, nearly £700 million worth of Cornish food and agricultural goods were exported around the world, and the Chief Secretary hopes that this figure will be bettered this year:

Food manufacturers in this region have made a flying start to 2018 and it's hugely encouraging to learn, once again, that food exports are up for the first quarter of this year.

Exporting boosts the earnings of a business, and the wages of local workers, it also enhances the reputation of Britain and Cornwall around the world.

I want to see more people abroad enjoying a taste of Cornwall, like the magnificent clotted cream I've seen made during my visit.

It is so important that local traders in this part of the world have the opportunity to increase their trade and create jobs and I'm here to learn how we can help them do this.

While visiting Cornwall, the Chief Secretary was hosted by groups of businesses and also visited several food manufacturing factories.

The government is delivering for the South West, and the region now has the second-lowest unemployment rate of all UK regions. And this year alone employment has increased by 37,000, with a record high 2.8 million people now in work.

Since 2010 the government has worked hard to make sure businesses in all regions of the UK can start-up and scale-up. By cutting corporation tax we have helped encourage this, with 1.2 million more businesses starting up since 2010.