

Press release: New business champions to support rights of disabled consumers

Eleven new sector champions, who will help to tackle the issues disabled people face as consumers, have been announced by the Minister for Disabled People, Work and Health today (21 February 2017).

The champions, who represent a range of different sectors and businesses, from gaming to retail, will use their influential status as leaders in their industries to promote the benefits of being inclusive to disabled people.

There are currently more than 11 million disabled people in the UK and the spending power of their households – ‘the purple pound’ – is almost £250 billion. But many businesses are missing out on this potential customer base by having everyday products and services which aren’t available to disabled people – who, as a result, are regularly excluded from experiences and opportunities that many others take for granted.

The sector champions will amplify the voices of disabled customers and employees within their own industries, increasing accountability and challenging inequality. They will also be able to highlight specific changes and improvements that will make a difference to the millions of people who often miss out.

The Minister for Disabled People, Work and Health, Penny Mordaunt, said:

As a public advocate for accessibility, these champions will help businesses realise the value of disabled consumers and the importance of catering to every customer’s needs.

These industries must become fully inclusive. Not being able to access the high street, products and services, transport or simply to access a loo jars with our national values: it must change.

The new sector champions will drive improvements to the accessibility and quality of services and facilities in their sector, helping to showcase best practice and show other businesses the merit of making disabled customers a priority.

The sector champions are:

- Helen Drury, Corporate Responsibility Manager at Intu (retail)
- Suzanne Bull MBE, CEO of Attitude is Everything (music)
- Huw Edwards, Public Affairs Director at UKActive (leisure)
- Chris Veitch, Co-founder of Access New Business (tourism)
- Robin Sheppard, Chairman of Bespoke Hotels (hotels)

- Dan Brooke, Chief Marketing & Communications Officer at Channel 4 (media)
- Sam Phillips, CMO at Omnicom Media Group (advertising)
- Michael Connolly, Regional Training and Standards Manager at OCS ltd (transport – airports)
- Jane Cole, Managing Director at Blackpool Transport Services (transport – buses)
- Trudie Hills, Disability Manager, Lloyds Bank (banking)
- Dr Jo Twist OBE, CEO of UKIE (gaming)

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5123

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[News story: Civil news: tips to help you when submitting VHCC family work](#)

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You can prevent delays to Very High Cost Case family work by making sure you avoid a few common mistakes.

We have checked through correspondence received by the VHCC family team in recent weeks and believe the following tips could help you avoid unnecessary delays.

Avoid sending documents by both email and DX

This often causes confusion and additional work for the team, meaning that it takes longer for them to issue a response.

Unless otherwise requested choose just one way of sending documents i.e. email or DX.

Download and use the template to register a VHCC case

As you work through the registration template remember that the VHCC team requires the following:

- certificate reference numbers
- number of hearing days and advocate meetings to date
- number of future hearing days/advocate meetings

- date of final hearing (if known)
- full breakdown of costs to date

If information is missing the VHCC team will need to ask for additional information, which will mean delays. A link to the page hosting the template is available below.

Use correct process for enquiries

Enquiries about cases managed within CCMS need to be dealt with in the CCMS environment. Non-CCMS cases enquiries can be dealt with by emailing: vhcc.queries@legalaid.gsi.gov.uk

Avoid emailing caseworkers directly as this can cause unnecessary delays.

Further information

[Family high cost cases](#) – scroll down to ‘when a case becomes high cost’ for link to ‘email template’ to help you register your VHCC case

[Green MEP launches post-Brexit agriculture reports and calls for ‘green tape’ as Leadsom attacks ‘red tape’](#)



21 February 2017

Green MEP Molly Scott Cato, a member of the European Parliament’s Agriculture Committee, has launched [two reports](#) on ideas for the future of farming post-Brexit. The launch comes on the day the [National Union of Farmers begin their annual conference](#) in Birmingham, where Defra Secretary, Andrea Leadsom, again [attacked the EU](#) for ‘tying farmers up in red tape’. She also called for a system based on simpler, more effective rules, where farmers will be ‘free to grow more, sell more and export more.’

However, Ms Leadsom offered farmers [no clear plan on farming post-Brexit](#) and Dr Scott Cato says that [questions to the government](#) reveal they lack ideas on the future of farming after the UK leaves the EU.

The two reports – one by the [Soil Association](#); the other by Simon Fairlie of the [Land Workers’ Alliance](#) – foresee a future where policies put soil health and biodiversity first, and where the way we use land helps tackle climate change. They say that to achieve this, farmers will need to receive at least

as much money as they currently get through the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). Molly Scott Cato said:

“Like Ms Leadsom, I don’t want farmers tied up in red tape, but we do need to bind ourselves in some green tape. We need to ensure land management protects and improves our soils, encourages biodiversity, and helps tackle climate change. The reports I have launched today contain a wealth of ideas on how we can achieve this.

“They also call for direct payments based on land area to be scrapped; instead future payments would be based on paying farmers for the public benefits they provide and for protecting the environment.

“With the government planning to remove us from the single market where around 65% of total UK agricultural exports are sold, platitudes about growing more, selling more and exporting more will ring hollow for most farmers.

“These reports show how to move UK agriculture away from a dependence on export markets and towards creating thriving rural communities by supporting family farms and relocalising food production. Brexit could be a unique opportunity to move towards an ecologically and economically sustainable farming system, but the government seems determined to move us in the wrong direction.”

Dr Tom MacMillan, Director of Innovation at the Soil Association, said:

“We’re hearing a fair bit of consensus from farming, nature and public interest groups on the big principles for agricultural policy after we leave the CAP – that the public expect high standards on animal welfare, for example, and that public money should pay for public benefits. What’s missing are practical and inspiring ideas that seize the chance to make a better fist of it, and face up to monumental challenges like climate change. So we’ve tried to set out a few game-changing ideas in our report”.

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[Speech: David Davis: Estonia and the UK will remain close partners after](#)

Brexit

Britain and Estonia share much in common. From our belief that healthcare should be offered to all, regardless of background, to the importance we place on the defence of western values and democracy.

And it is in that spirit of shared values and friendship that I come to Tallinn today.

The message I bring with me is a simple one – Britain will always prioritise the important relationship between our two nations, now more than ever as we seek a strong partnership with the EU even after we leave its institutions.

Our deep relationship extends back decades, starting during the War of Independence in 1918 when the UK sent a Royal Navy flotilla to secure Estonia's freedom.

The British servicemen who gave their lives in that conflict are commemorated in the Estonian Defence Forces military cemetery in Tallinn.

And that strong military partnership continues today. Not only are we fully signed up members of NATO, but we are also two of only 5 countries that meet the spending target of 2% of GDP on defence.

Our troops fought together under the NATO banner in Afghanistan, and are now working together to defeat Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

And you need look no further for an indication of the importance Britain places on our relationship than the fact that in April this year, we will be deploying 800 UK troops to Tapa.

That collaboration will be of no less importance when we leave the European Union, because in the face of growing concern about the threat to security across the continent we must bolster our efforts to defend the western world.

So our servicemen and women will continue to work proudly alongside yours in the years ahead, providing vital reassurance and deterrence along NATO's eastern border.

But our relationship runs further than our important shared interests in defence.

Estonia is one of the top travel destinations in the world and last year around 115,000 tourists visited Estonia from the UK.

In that context, I understand that the 15,000 Estonians currently living in the UK want certainty about their rights once the UK leaves the EU. And while Estonians' existing rights are not affected the British government wants to get a deal done to secure long term rights quickly that protects the rights of all EU citizens living in the UK, and British citizens living in the EU. Indeed we would have liked to have come to such an agreement already, and

have been clear it will be an absolute priority once formal negotiations begin.

It's in no one's interest to see any new barriers to trade. The UK is Estonia's 4th biggest export partner in services, and trade between our two nations is worth more than €1bn a year.

The UK is important for the Estonian start-up community. Many have their headquarters in London, including the Estonian-founded money transfer firm TransferWise.

So as the Prime Minister outlined last month, Britain is seeking a new, strong partnership with the European Union. A partnership that maintains the close relationship we have with member states and builds further on them.

That partnership is one that will be to our mutual benefit. We are absolutely clear that we want the EU to succeed economically, politically and socially – and we want to remain a good friend and neighbour.

I'm confident that if we approach negotiations over the UK's exit and new partnership with the EU in a spirit of goodwill, we can deliver a positive outcome that works for all.

Estonia and the UK will remain close partners. And my message to you, as the first UK Cabinet minister to visit Estonia since the UK voted to leave the EU, is that our important relationship will not diminish after our exit. Indeed, it will grow stronger still.

News story: Famine in South Sudan

Following the declaration of famine in parts of South Sudan yesterday (Monday 20 February) – the first famine in the world for six years – there has been widespread media coverage including by the BBC, ITV, Sky, Guardian, Times, Financial Times and the Independent highlighting the worsening humanitarian crisis.

□What is happening in South Sudan?

The situation in South Sudan is dire and almost half the population are in urgent need. Nearly 5 million people do not have enough food, 100,000 people are facing starvation and a million more are on the brink of famine. This is caused by prolonged conflict, ongoing violence and sexual atrocities which has displaced millions, and deteriorating drought which is threatening lives, and risks destabilising the region.

We are expecting the number of people facing the daily struggle of not having enough food to eat to rise even further.

The areas where famine has been declared have seen some of the most intense fighting between Government and opposition forces, and restrictions on access for humanitarian organisations trying to provide vital food, water and shelter for the most vulnerable people.

People are being forced to flee from their homes and almost 2,400 South Sudanese refugees are arriving in Uganda every day on average.

The UN has today launched an appeal for \$1.6bn for South Sudan and has previously highlighted the growing risk of genocide and widespread atrocities if the conflict escalates. The world can't allow that.

What has UK aid achieved?

Last year, UK aid in South Sudan:

- Reached 440,000 people with food
- Provided clean water and sanitation for 490,000 people
- Provided 660,000 people with health and medical support, including mothers and children
- Provided 130,000 people with shelter
- Treated 360,000 children against severe acute malnutrition.

In 2016, the UK's support to Uganda provided:

- food for 650,000 people including 45,000 children
- shelter for 56,250 people
- blankets, water containers and sanitary towels for 64,000 people
- Vaccinations for 210,000 children.

What is the UK doing?

The UK has led the way in providing support to vulnerable people in South Sudan, giving over £500 million over the last three years to ensure millions get urgently needed food, water and medicine, as well as longer term support to provide much-needed education. We are helping more than 1 million children to go to school and supporting over 1,000 health facilities to cope with two years of civil war.

We are also providing support for the region, bolstering help for neighbouring countries such as Uganda – now the largest refugee-hosting nation in Africa with over one million refugees – to cope with the influx of South Sudanese families who have been forced to flee their homes. The vast majority (85%) of those arriving are women and children in dire need of assistance and protection.

This year, up to 400 UK troops will deploy to support the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), providing vital engineering and medical assistance to help improve security at UN camps and support UNMISS's capacity to protect civilians and ensure humanitarian access, which is central to their mission.

We are working with the international community to support the African Union and region to pressure the Government of South Sudan to engage meaningfully

in peace and in a genuinely inclusive dialogue. We are also working through the UN to ensure the Government are held to account and we are strong supporters of an arms embargo and placing sanctions on individuals who are driving the conflict.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

This is an urgent and severe crisis, with almost half the population in desperate need.

Almost 5 million face the daily threat of going without enough food and water and 3 million people have been forced from their homes because of ruthless violence and widespread use of rape.

The UK is ensuring millions of people in South Sudan get urgently needed food, water and medicine, as well as longer term support.

The UK will not look the other way while people of South Sudan suffer: the Government of South Sudan must put an end to ethnic violence, allow humanitarian access and deliver long-lasting peace.

The international community now needs to step up alongside Britain to stop famine spreading and help support stability in South Sudan and the region, which is firmly in all our interests.

Find out more

For more information about how the UK is helping in South Sudan, please see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/world/south-sudan>