

News story: Edmund de Waal OBE reappointed to the Royal Mint Advisory Committee

HM Treasury today (19 March 2018) announced the reappointment of Edmund de Waal OBE to the Royal Mint Advisory Committee. The reappointment will be for a term of five years.

The Royal Mint Advisory Committee on the Design of Coins, Medals, Seals and Decorations was established in 1922 with the personal approval of King George V. Its purpose is to advise the Chancellor of the Exchequer on new designs for United Kingdom coins and to advise other government departments on new designs for official medals and seals. It is classed as an Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (Lower Tier).

Edmund de Waal is an artist and a writer on the history of art, and has brought valuable expertise on these subjects to the committee. The appointment was made in accordance with the Code of Practice published by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Further information

All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for appointees' political activity (if any declared) to be made public. Mr De Waal has confirmed he has not engaged in any political activity in the last five years. He is also a Trustee of the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Press release: Video offers virtual journey through Lower Thames Crossing

Drivers can experience what their journey through Britain's second longest road tunnel will be like once it opens in 2027 following the release of a video by Highways England today (Monday 19 March).

In the new video, Highways England takes drivers on a journey through the two mile long crossing, which will feature two tunnels taking a three lane road under the River Thames between Gravesham, Kent and Thurrock, Essex.

The video also illustrates how the 13 mile route, that will include the tunnel, will link drivers to the M25, the A2 and the A13, including the new

junctions and link roads being built as part of the £4.4 – £6.2 billion project.

The animation shows the tunnelled section, the three junctions north of the River Thames and a map of the full alignment of the proposed route. It has been published to provide an early impression of what the road and tunnel could look like once completed in 2027.

[LTC video.](#)

Highways England has also released drawings showing the vertical alignment of the route, which demonstrates where the route is above and below existing ground levels.

Highways England plans to carry out a statutory consultation later this year. The consultation will enable stakeholders and communities to shape the proposed design of the route ahead of a development consent order application for permission from the Secretary of State for Transport to build the Lower Thames Crossing.

Work is continuing on the design ahead of the statutory consultation and the video released today represents the design of the route at the time of production. There have been changes to the route and these and future changes will be reflected in further materials, which will be published in the run up to and during the Lower Thames Crossing statutory consultation.

Highways England Project Director Tim Jones said:

The video fly-through of the Lower Thames Crossing will give people a better understanding of how the proposed road and tunnel could look once built. We are continuing to develop the design based on feedback from stakeholders and local communities so that we put forward a route which maximises the positive opportunities the Lower Thames Crossing could bring, while minimising impacts on communities and the environment. This video does not represent the final design, and we will continue to share our thinking and designs as we approach statutory consultation later this year.

Tim Jones will be speaking to businesses, stakeholders and partners on the Lower Thames Crossing later this week when he presents at the Southend Business Partnership on Thursday to provide an update on this once-in-a-generation project.

Highways England will be responsible for delivering the crossing, which will increase capacity for crossing the Thames east of London by 70 per cent, easing pressure on the existing Dartford Crossing – currently the only road crossing of the river east of the capital.

The new crossing will be linked to the road network by a new road north of the river, which will join the M25 between junctions 29 and 30, and a new road south of the river which, will join the A2 east of Gravesend.

The Lower Thames Crossing will deliver an £8 billion economic stimulus, and create some 6,000 jobs. The crossing will enable sustainable local development and regional growth leading to a stronger economy and will open opportunities for investment in housing. It will allow businesses to grow, creating more jobs, apprenticeships and training, while also connecting local communities to jobs, leisure and retail.

Around 55 million journeys are made each year on the Dartford Crossing, six million more than it was designed for, and it suffers from closures due to incidents almost daily.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

News story: Restrictions on Croatian workers to expire in June

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes made the announcement in a Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament.

Legally, the UK could only extend the controls for a final 2 years if there was clear evidence that removing the controls would lead to a serious labour market disturbance. The Government has considered the evidence and with unemployment at near record lows, employment of UK nationals at near record highs and the Eurozone and Croatia forecast to grow strongly over the next 2 years, concluded the economic case for an extension could not be made.

When Croatia joined the EU in 2013, the UK and other member states were able to restrict the access that Croatian citizens had to their labour markets for a maximum of 7 years. The UK is one of a few EU countries (Austria, Slovenia and the Netherlands) which applies such measures. The restrictions have meant that, unless an exemption applied, Croatians needed permission from the Home Office to work in the UK.

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

This decision has not been taken lightly, but after careful consideration, we have concluded that there is not enough evidence

to satisfy the legal requirements to extend the controls for the final 2 year period.

Net migration of EU citizens has fallen in the last year by 75,000 and since joining the EU in 2013 only around a few thousand Croatians have moved to the UK. Estimates suggest there are below 10,000 Croatian in the UK and by comparison, in 2009 at the same point of transitional controls for Romanian and Bulgarian workers there were around 57,000 Romanians and 35,000 Bulgarians living in the UK, according to the Office for National Statistics.

The time-limited restrictions to member states' labour markets were provided for under the Treaty of Accession 2011 between Croatia and the EU and can be applied for five years, plus an additional two years if required to protect the member state's labour market from serious disturbance.

Under the UK's application of the restrictions, Croatian partners and spouses of British nationals or other nationals settled in the UK are exempt, as are Croatian citizens who have worked in the UK for 12 months with the appropriate authorisation.

Further information can be found in the [guidance for Croatian nationals on working in the UK](#).

Press release: David Davis' statement: EU-UK Article 50 negotiations Brussels, Monday 19 March 2018

Thank you Michel, both for your words and for your kind words about our team.

In December we reached an important milestone by achieving agreement on the first phase of negotiations.

And today, we've taken another significant step by reaching agreement on the next phase.

Which I am confident will be welcomed by the European Council when it meets later this week.

Our teams have worked hard and at pace to secure the terms of a time-limited implementation period that gives the certainty demanded by businesses and citizens across the European Union and United Kingdom.

And at this point I'd like to join Michel in commending both our negotiating teams for their skill, their commitment and from time to time their ability to go without sleep.

In my speech in Teesport in January, I set out a framework for delivering a bridge to the future.

One that sees the UK formally leave the European Union on the 29th of March. Which gives everyone time they need to prepare for the future, by ensuring our access to each other's markets continues on current terms.

The deal we've reached today does just that.

As Michel outlined we've taken a decisive step by translating much of December's Joint Report into the legal text of the Withdrawal Agreement.

In only a few weeks we have managed to finalise the chapters on the financial settlement and citizens' rights – delivering on our commitment to provide certainty to citizens.

So let me take each point in turn, starting with the implementation period.

Throughout this process, one message has been clear from businesses in the United Kingdom and across the European Union – that they need to be able to plan for the future with confidence.

Businesses need not delay investment decisions, or rush through contingency plans based on guesses about the future deal.

Instead they now have certainty about the terms that will apply immediately after our withdrawal.

Meaning that they can continue to operate and invest with confidence, as the design of our future partnership with the European Union becomes clear.

And this is true across the whole United Kingdom family – because the territorial scope of the Withdrawal Agreement makes clear it includes Gibraltar.

We continue with our positive dialogue with the Spanish on how we improve cooperation in the future.

Platform for the future

The implementation period is not only about providing certainty in the short term. It's also about beginning life outside the European Union, serving as a platform on which we build our future relationship.

Which is why, as Michel said, the United Kingdom will be able to step out, sign and ratify new trade deals with old friends – and new allies – around the globe for the first time in more than 40 years

These will come into force when the implementation period is over.

Providing new opportunities for businesses across the United Kingdom and seizing one of Brexit's greatest opportunities.

International agreements

And during this period, we have agreed those international agreements which arise from our European Union membership continue to apply as now.

This provides further certainty for businesses, who can be confident there will be no disruption to their existing trade relationship as we leave the European Union

Safeguards

To ensure our agreement is faithfully and fully implemented we are establishing a Joint Committee made up of representatives from the United Kingdom and the European Union.

This committee will provide a way to resolve concerns as they arise.

And will be underpinned by a clear commitment from both sides to act in good faith.

One of the key objectives I set out in my Teesport speech was that the United Kingdom would be able to make its voice heard during this period and ensure our interests are protected.

This delivers on that objective.

Fisheries

We've also agreed specific safeguards when it comes to annual fishing negotiations.

These arrangements will only apply for the negotiations in 2019, since we will still be a Member State for those that take place at the end of this year.

Through 2020 we will be negotiating fishing opportunities as an independent coastal state, deciding who can access our waters and on what terms.

For the year where it is relevant, we have agreed the European Union will have to consult us ahead of the negotiations.

And the United Kingdom's share of the total catch cannot be changed, protecting the interests of the United Kingdom fishing community.

Foreign policy and defence collaboration

The final way in which the implementation period serves as a platform for the future is in foreign and defence policy.

As recent events demonstrate, close cooperation with our allies is central to standing up for a rules-based international order.

So when it comes to foreign policy and defence collaboration, we have set out a plan for an ambitious partnership.

One that goes beyond the relationship the European Union has with any other third country.

And I know this desire is shared by our European Union partners.

The deal we have reached today envisages us moving to that partnership at the soonest possible moment.

And in the intervening period, our valued cooperation will continue.

However, as is the case today there may be occasions when our vital national policy means we cannot agree with European Union decision.

In those cases the United Kingdom could choose not to apply it.

Wider progress on the Withdrawal Agreement

Securing an implementation period, with these key flexibilities, is a major achievement.

And if it was all we had achieved since December I'd be proud of my team.

But in addition we have made rapid progress across the wider Withdrawal Agreement – reaching agreement on much of the legal text, and locking down entire chapters on citizens' rights and the financial settlement.

Most importantly this means that, just as we're giving certainty to businesses, we're also providing the same for citizens.

And in doing so we've reached agreement on the package that should apply to those who arrive during the implementation period itself.

A few weeks ago, we proposed a pathway to settlement for EU citizens, which was welcomed by Member States.

Today we have delivered on the spirit of this offer, and also made it reciprocal, using the December deal as the basis.

In doing so, we have made sure the voluntary reference mechanism we agreed in December will start when we leave in March 2019 for any challenges relating to applications for settled status.

The reference mechanism relating to other rights, such as social security, which are only relevant after the implementation period, will begin in December 2020.

Northern Ireland and Ireland

Of course, there are areas where there is more to do before we can finalise the agreement as a whole – one of which is Northern Ireland.

Make no mistake – both the United Kingdom and the European Union are committed to the Joint Report in its entirety.

And in keeping with that commitment, we agree on the need to include legal text detailing the ‘backstop’ solution for the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland in the Withdrawal Agreement that is acceptable to both sides.

But it remains our intention to achieve a partnership that is so close as to not require specific measures in relation to Northern Ireland, and therefore we will engage in detail on all the scenarios set out in the Joint Report.

We have also reached consensus on the full set of issues which need to be addressed in any solution in order to avoid a hard border, which is why, last week, we set out a work programme to tackle them.

There are also some elements of the draft protocol – such as the Common Travel Area – on which we agree.

So while there is as yet no agreement on the right operational approach, we know what we need to do – and we’re going to get on with it.

Conclusion

In December, we set out a shared ambition to reach agreement on the implementation period as soon as possible.

Today we have achieved that ambition, thanks to the hard work and late nights of both our dedicated teams.

Now, alongside progressing the outstanding issues in the Withdrawal Agreement, our attention must turn to the future.

In Munich and at Mansion House, the Prime Minister set out a powerful vision. One which will ensure our economic and security cooperation reflects our unique starting point and our shared history.

My job and that of my team is to deliver on that vision – and in doing so, we must seize the moment and carry forward the momentum of the past few weeks.

The deal we have struck today, on top of that agreed in December, should give us confidence that a good deal for the United Kingdom and the European Union is closer than ever before.

[Press release: Images offer glimpse of](#)

major upgrade on the A46 in Coventry

As part of the government's £15.2bn road investment strategy, Highways England is developing a scheme to improve the junctions along the A46 which includes the Binley and Walsgrave junctions.

The project is taking a phased approach to the upgrade, and will progress with Binley junction (also known as the TGI Island) first, as it currently suffers from heavy congestion making journey times unreliable for drivers as well as for local traffic.

The road is a strategic link between the East and West Midlands, connecting Coventry and Warwickshire to the motorway network.

Following the public consultation in 2017, Highways England has continued to develop the design taking into account comments and issues raised during the consultation. This included looking at what can be put in place to minimise the impact on the environment and local communities.

The plans for the Binley junction will see the A46 dual carriageway become a flyover that will separate local traffic from using the A46. This will mean that trunk road traffic will not need to pass through the roundabout and will benefit from shorter journey times. It will also be easier for local traffic to navigate the roundabout as there will be less traffic using it.

The design will also include improvements to the existing footways and cycle paths.

The preferred route includes a number of changes from the previous design that was presented in February 2017.

Changes include:

- taking on board customer feedback, the design has changed so that more of the A46 will now be raised on a bridge structure, removing part of the visual "wall" effect
- the previous proposal included a new roundabout; the existing roundabout will remain in the new design
- the combined cycle and footway around the junction will be extended and improved. Additional lighting will be provided under the flyover to make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists

Highways England project manager, Steve Wrenn, said:

We carefully considered all feedback. This process has been detailed and time consuming, but this has been necessary to ensure we develop the best design possible to take forward as our preferred route.

Once complete, this scheme will relieve congestion for those

travelling through Coventry on the A46.

Construction will begin in spring 2020 and is expected to be completed by spring 2022.

For a copy of the preferred route announcement leaflet and more information about the scheme, [visit the website](#).

Alternatively email ww.highways.gov.uk/A46coventryjunctions or call the Highways England Customer Contact Centre on 0300 123 5000.

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