

Press release: Coventry to host UK City of Culture 2021

The decision was made after an independent panel of culture experts, chaired by television producer and screenwriter Phil Redmond, visited each of the five candidate cities before recommending Coventry as the winner.

The bid impressed the judges with its focus on youth, diversity and the scale of impact not only in Coventry but across the UK as a whole.

[Coventry](#) will take the title from [Hull 2017](#), which has used City of Culture to transform its reputation as a destination for arts and culture both at home and abroad.

It is estimated that Hull's local economy has received a £60 million boost in 2017 and the city has been praised for how it has engaged local residents in the cultural programme. Nine out of 10 residents have attended, or taken part, in a City of Culture event and since it was awarded the title in 2013 it has received more than £3 billion of investment.

John Glen, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, said:

I would like to congratulate Coventry on winning UK City of Culture 2021. The title is an incredible opportunity for Coventry to boost investment in the local economy, grow tourism and put arts and culture centre stage.

We received excellent bids from all the cities and I would like to thank them for their efforts.

In 2017 I have seen the truly transformative effect this prestigious title has had on Hull. The city has embraced City of Culture and in doing so has demonstrated how culture, the arts and heritage can bring communities together. I look forward to seeing what Coventry has in store in 2021.

Phil Redmond, Chair of the Independent Expert Advisory Panel said:

Once again the process has highlighted the depth and strength of culture across the UK. That made it difficult choosing a winner, but I would like to congratulate Coventry and I am sure they will build on the legacy of Derry-Londonderry and Hull and bring about a transformational change in 2021.

For those that weren't successful this time, I hope, as has

happened in other places, that they will look to the future and build on the wider cultural partnerships they have created.

The third UK City of Culture announcement comes after the five shortlisted cities were assessed over a number of months by the independent advisory panel. Each city was visited by the panel and invited to present details of their plans for City of Culture.

There have been two previous UK Cities of Culture: Derry-Londonderry in 2013 and Hull in 2017. Both cities have realised economic benefits such as increased investment and a rise in visitor numbers.

Coventry now has three years to prepare its year-long programme of activity for 2021. As part of its status as UK City of Culture 2012, Coventry will be eligible for a £3 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

For further information or interview bids please contact Faye Jackson in the DCMS press office on faye.jackson@culture.gov.uk or 020 7211 6263 / 07788 345722

Expert views were provided on the final bids by Martin Green (CEO, Artistic Director, Hull Culture Company) and digital culture expert Will Saunders (Creative Director, BBC studios).

News story: Education Secretary expands UK-China internship programme

At least 300 young people will have the chance to live and work in China following the expansion of a government-funded internship scheme.

Education Secretary Justine Greening announced today (7 December) that the Generation UK-China scheme will be expanded to give twice as many young people from disadvantaged and less represented backgrounds the opportunity to take up internships in China from 2018.

Speaking at the UK-China People-to-People event, which celebrates the growing links between the two countries, including education policy, Education Secretary Justine Greening said:

This scheme allows our young people to immerse themselves in different cultures, broaden their horizons and develop the skills they need to thrive in an increasingly global jobs market.

Many of them will be people who were the first in their family to

go to university and programmes like this help young people to experience first-hand just how far their talents can take them.

Evidence shows that students and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit most from programmes of this nature, and the Generation UK internships will be focussed on young people from these backgrounds.

Press release: 2017 Basic Payment Scheme payments underway

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) has announced that over 54,000 farmers in England received their 2017 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) money over the first four days of the payment window.

Payments between 1 – 6 December were made to over 63% of eligible claimants, and worth more than £850 million in total. These include a range of 2017 BPS claim types and sizes, as well as those inspected and farmers with common land.

Thanks to increased entitlement values and greening rates, coupled with the favourable BPS exchange rate confirmed in September, basic payments will be worth 25% more on average this year, compared to 2015.

RPA Chief Executive, Paul Caldwell said:

I am pleased that the RPA has paid a similar number of farmers to last year at the start of the 2017 payment window. I understand entirely the importance of timely payments, and we remain focussed on getting the rest of the payments out as quickly as possible.

Further updates on figures will be made throughout the payment window on GOV.UK.

BPS payments are made direct to bank accounts via BACS transfer so farmers should make sure RPA has the most up-to-date account details. Once a payment has been made a remittance advice is sent in the post, confirming the amount paid. Claim statements will also be sent, explaining how payments have been worked out.

Support

More information on BPS 2017, including scheme rules and details of how payments are calculated, is available at www.gov.uk/guidance/bps-2017.

Avoiding fraud

Farmers are urged to be vigilant against fraud. Remember:

- Your bank, police or the RPA will never ask you to reveal your online password, PIN or bank account details or ask you to make a payment over the telephone.
- Never enter into a conversation with someone you don't know or open unknown or unexpected computer links or emails.
- If in doubt, call the organisation back, ideally on a different telephone, using a number you are familiar with or you know to be official. You can usually find this on the organisation's website, correspondence or statement. Contact Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 without delay for advice and to register your concern.

Speech: Improving UK Competitiveness, Strengthening the Rule of Law

May I start by thanking Policy Exchange for hosting us today, Ian King for Chairing our Panel, and Linklaters for their excellent report. It is a valuable contribution to the debate on Brexit, and it demonstrates the hard-work that is going into preparing for Brexit amongst the legal profession.

I should disclose, at the outset, that I trained as a solicitor at Linklaters, way back when in the late 90's. They knocked me into shape after Law School. And I remain hugely grateful for the professional training and mentoring I received.

I confess that, as someone who campaigned for Brexit in the face of prevailing opinion in the City, I always stand in a certain degree of trepidation at events like this ... that Richard Godden isn't sat there quietly thinking ... we really screwed up with that one.

All I can say by way of mitigation, is that Linklaters have always placed huge value on critical evaluation, really scrutinising what is in the best long-term interests of their clients ...

And they even sent me to Brussels for six months – where I got my greatest exposure to Brexit – as part of their EU, competition law, and WTO practice.

I'm not blaming Linklaters for becoming a Brexiteer.

But at a tender age, they played an influential role in my formative experience of Brussels. And then I left for the Foreign Office.

With that in mind, I want to thank Richard and Linklaters for this excellent

report, entitled “Improving the UK’s competitiveness post-Brexit by enhancing the Rule of Law”.

It reminded me of that great line, by Thomas Edison, that: “opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”

I am in no doubt about the challenges and uncertainty inherent for the UK, at this sensitive moment in our negotiations and preparations for leaving the EU.

The report is clear-eyed about those and about the wider domestic challenges we face. But, it was also important to see the report present this cross-roads in our history as a ‘unique’ opportunity, to reinforce the rule of law, increase predictability of our laws and law-making, and strengthen the UK’s underlying competitiveness.

I couldn’t agree more.

That will require some more listening on all sides of the debate, And it will require a lot of hard graft ... to make sure we both sensibly manage the challenges, and grasp the opportunities that lie ahead.

Above all, this is a shared national endeavour.

We need a bit more unity of purpose.

And, as the report says, we in government and Parliament will need advice and support from businesses and the legal profession to help make a success of Brexit. Fortunately, there’s no shortage of that.

So today, I want to briefly set out what I see, in government, as some of the key challenges and opportunities affecting the legal sector, before opening the debate up to the high calibre panel Policy Exchange and Linklaters have assembled.

Mitigating the Challenges

In terms of the rule of law, perhaps the most significant and pervasive challenge of Brexit is to avoid potential legal disruption, and the impact this could have on business and citizens across the country, if we don’t address it carefully indeed.

The rule of law – a term we often hear bandied around – sounds rather grandiose. But protecting legal certainty means making sure people have predictable rules that they can plan their daily lives around.

From rules protecting consumers when they buy goods in the shops, to the principles of competition law designed to set a level playing field for businesses to rely on.

I am currently one of the Ministers steering the EU Withdrawal Bill through Committee stage of the House of Commons, and we are five days through an eight day gauntlet.

The Bill is pretty complex. I won't bore you with details, but it addresses this fundamental challenge by taking a snapshot of the substantive EU principles, rules and legislation that apply in the UK at the date of departure, and retaining that body of law as UK law.

That means we will have the time to carefully consider which aspects of EU law, in the future, we wish to retain, amend or repeal.

Crucially – for those nervous on the legal side or more generally, it averts the legal cliff-edge some fear.

It paves the way for a smooth legal transition.

Clearly, in terms of the Bill, there are some contentious areas.

The government is in listening mode.

That's not merely a rhetorical doffing of the cap in the direction of critics.

We are actively making sure we can give Parliament and the public the reassurances they need.

For example, it is quite right to look very carefully at the amount of legislation that should be passed by primary and secondary legislation, along with the processes for enacting it.

We want maximum scrutiny and transparency ... but we're also up against a deadline – not of our choosing – imposed on us under EU law by Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty.

So the job for somebody like me is to make sure we can deliver that smooth transition, we all want, within the timeframe we face.

I am confident we can get the balance right, with the appropriate scrutiny arrangements for secondary legislation. Contrary to what you hear amidst the media din on Brexit, there is a lot of goodwill and sensible dialogue going on between Ministers and MPs across all areas of Brexit to make sure we design proper arrangements to get the legislative job done.

Beyond the Bill, and for all the media froth, negotiations between the UK and the EU are making solid progress in the lead up to next week's EU Council.

We are, as the Prime Minister has said, within 'touching distance' of a deal on the status of UK ex-pats on the continent, and EU nationals here.

The contours of agreement on other issues, including the approach to outstanding financial obligations and Northern Ireland, are also taking shape.

And the EU has instructed its officials to prepare for trade talks, also a positive sign.

Clearly, the legal profession has a very real stake in all of this, especially amongst practitioners focussed and advising on UK financial services.

I won't give a running commentary on the negotiations, particularly at this sensitive moment.

But, made clear that we want a deep and special partnership with our EU friends, which includes frictionless trade in goods and services.

And I note, in passing, that confidence in the City remains very strong.

Just one illustration of that bold assertion is the latest publication of the Global Financial Centres Index in September, which still has London ranked number 1, with the gap between London and New York at number 2 expanding.

Incidentally, there isn't an EU hub in the top 10.

We are ambitious for a strong, win-win, deal with our EU partners, and there is a lot of work going on to achieve that.

Clearly, we need to be ready for all outcomes, and it takes two to tango. But I note that on the EU side they are also acutely conscious of the sheer volume of UK finance supporting the continental economy.

Beyond lawyers working in financial services, in August, the UK set out its position paper, 'Providing a Cross-Border Civil Judicial Cooperation Framework', to make sure we have as much legal continuity in the arrangements for the recognition and enforcement of judgments, insolvency jurisdiction and rules, small claims judgments and family law judgments.

This is important, for supply chains, business transactions and also family relationships, which all cross borders and all have resonance for people in their daily lives.

There is a wider corpus of private international law, which the UK could fall back on if necessary.

But, we want the optimum result, the win-win scenario of a deal with the EU that allows for us to continue our close and comprehensive cross border civil judicial cooperation.

From child custody arrangements to cross-border commercial claims, that is manifestly in both sides' interests.

Seizing the Opportunities

So, yes, there are challenges that we need to mitigate and prepare for.

But there are even greater opportunities – and it is vital that we are decisive and seize them.

I agree with the Linklaters' report, which is clear eyed about both the

opportunities and challenges we face, that we now face a 'unique' opportunity to reinforce the rule of law.

The EU Withdrawal Bill will help guarantee a smooth and orderly Brexit, but it also delivers on the number one reason people voted to Leave the EU, which is to take back democratic control over our laws, so MPs like me are more accountable to voters for the decisions we make and the legislation we pass.

That is part of the social contract in this country.

It is absolutely fundamental to our democracy.

The Linklaters report also has some interesting ideas about improving scrutiny, and quality of law-making.

Certainly, as we make our way through the legislation that needs to be passed before the date of exit from the EU.

And we consider the changes we can make for the future, this should mark the moment, an opportunity if you like, for a democratic renaissance, both in terms of politicians' ultimate accountability to the public for the laws that govern them, but also the quality of laws and the scrutiny that informs them.

In that respect, I think our approach to ending the direct jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice is not some procedural house-keeping exercise.

I am proud that we have a world-leading judiciary in this country.

I believe, both on principle and in terms of producing at a practical level, better quality judgments that maximise legal predictability for the citizens of the country, that the UK Supreme Court should have the last word on the laws of the land, it should do what it says on the tin, and it should be supreme in the meaningful sense.

And nor do I think it would make any sense to give the Luxembourg Court the crucial role of determining future international disputes that may arise between the UK and the EU after we leave.

As we have made clear in our position paper on dispute resolution, we need a process for dispute resolution that commands confidence on both sides.

So it would be, obviously I think, partisan and lop-sided to allow either the UK Supreme Court or the ECJ to decide those international disputes at the international level.

It would also by the way conflict with the overwhelming global practice in dispute resolution, including the EU's own practice. If you look at the EU's international agreements, and certainly there are none on free trade where the ECJ has compulsory jurisdiction to settle international disputes.

So as our position paper sets out, drawing on the EU practice, but thinking about the huge tapestry of global practice that there is out there, a typical international dispute resolution process might involve a panel of three arbitrators: one appointed by the UK, one appointed by the EU, and a third

chosen by the other two.

There is a wealth of global practice to guide us in this area, so it is not beyond the wit of man to find a balanced approach to dispute settlement.

And, just as we take back democratic control at home, we are restless in government – and certainly for those who campaigned to leave, as I did – we are restless to project the United Kingdom's global reach abroad.

I think that presents major opportunities for the UK legal sector.

UK legal services employ well over 300,000 people – two thirds of those are outside London.

UK law and British courts command respect right around the world.

The proof lies with the 200 foreign law firms from around 40 jurisdictions that are currently doing business here today, and the 27% of the world's legal jurisdictions already using the English common law.

According to the 2015 International Arbitration Survey, London was the preferred location to resolve disputes. Last year, we had almost 26,000 disputes settled by alternative dispute resolution here in the UK.

It's kind of ironic that for all the domestic haggling and wrangling on Brexit, we risk forgetting that internationally, Britain is the place people think of as the place they would most like to come to resolve their disputes. That is a unique comparative advantage for us.

And let's not forget that all this commercial activity is not just good for business. Lawyers generated £31.5 billion of revenue profit in 2016, and the taxation from this goes to fund the local school and GP practice, so it's got a huge social benefit as well as being important for employment and the economy.

So, legal services are a major comparative advantage for UK plc, and is a distinctive element of post-Brexit Britain's USP.

As the Courts Minister, that's one of the reasons why this government is investing over £1 billion in court reform, Using technology to make our courts and wider justice system more efficient and effective, more sensitive for victims, but also is run in a simpler and more effective way and is also simpler for the parties to use in terms of litigation.

As part of that, last month, the City of London Corporation and HMCTS announced plans for a state of the art court in the Square Mile, hearing civil cases, but also developing our expertise in tackling fraud and cyber-crime.

Far from looking inward, our vision is to reinforce the UK as a global centre for business, the best place in the world to resolve disputes ... the UK renowned not just for our economic competitiveness, but also for promoting the rule of law, and for doing business with integrity.

Equally, as we take advantage of the ability to forge our own distinct trade agenda, aside from the EU, There are far-reaching global opportunities for expanding the export of UK legal services. Free trade negotiations aren't easy.

When I worked at the FCO for six years, I used to negotiate International Investment Protection and Promotion Agreements, including with Mexico and Iran under the Khatami administration.

At times, they could be tough going at times as any trade investment negotiations are.

But, we should embrace that challenge too, from China to South America, where we are ambitious to extend our market share in legal services.

In fact, the Ministry of Justice is already plugging our legal wares through the Britain is Great campaign, Promoting the expertise our law firms, Promoting UK law as the pre-eminent choice for regulating international business relationships, and spreading the word ... that the UK is the most impartial, swift and reliable jurisdiction to come for settling international disputes.

Lord Keen my Ministerial colleague at the MoJ launched this campaign in Singapore in October, and we are taking that message to 168 countries around the world.

The ultimate goal is liberalisation in strategic overseas markets such as China and India, and Ministers are already in discussions with their counterparts in all of those places.

Sure, this will require a huge amount of hard graft, just as Edison described, but the opportunities are enormous and we must be confident and decisive in grasping them.

Conclusion

So let's be clear-sighted about the challenges in the direction the British people have chosen. Let's avoid those legal potholes – and certainly any talk of legal cliff edges – on the road that lies ahead.

But, as we responsibly seek to minimise legal risk, please ... let's not cower in the corner, afraid of our own shadow. Britain's better than that.

Let's work hard, and let's work together across government, parliament, business, legal practitioners, NGOs...

And let's grasp the enormous opportunities for post-Brexit Britain, for democratic renewal at home, for energetic free trade abroad ... and for promoting our world-beating legal expertise from Rio to Shanghai ... and everywhere in between.

Press release: Andrew McNaughton appointed to new strategic role at HS2

Andrew will provide strategic advice and assurance to the High Speed Two (HS2) Executive and Board on technical matters. At the same time Andrew will advise both the Department of Transport and other government departments on wider transport matters.

Andrew will also continue his role as an expert witness for the project, as required, and continue to be chairman of the World High Speed Rail Committee.

Andrew was HS2 Ltd's first official employee, joining the company as Chief Engineer in 2009 and guiding it from concept to the edge of reality in the period since.

Professor Andrew McNaughton said:

After leading the design and authorisation phases of HS2 for the last 9 years I am stepping back from a full time executive leadership function to this more strategic role which, I am delighted to say, will continue my strong link with HS2 whilst also giving me more freedom to advise the government here, and others elsewhere, on both high speed railway development, and wider transport issues.

The chairman of HS2 Ltd, David Higgins, said:

Andrew's expertise and experience has been critical in getting HS2 to the point it is now, and the Board is delighted that it will be able to continue to draw on that expertise in the future.

The chief executive of HS2 Ltd, Mark Thurston, said:

Andrew was not only our first employee, but has also been an inspiration to many of those who have joined since. He has been critical in establishing the project and in recruiting the highly talented team that will carry his and many others' work through to fruition. We will continue to lean heavily on his expertise, at the same time as benefiting from the perspective Andrew gains from his work with other organisations.

Andrew will be stepping down from his full time role leading the Technical

Directorate, taking on the new position from the 2nd January. He will continue to report into Mark Thurston. An announcement on the future leadership of the Technical Directorate will be made shortly.