

# News story: Government appoints Small Business Commissioner to champion voice of small business

The appointment of the father-of-three from Birmingham marks an important step toward ensuring small businesses have the support they need to thrive and grow – a central tenet of the Government's Industrial Strategy.

As Commissioner, Mr Uppal will lead an independent office tasked with empowering small businesses. The role will be crucial to supporting small businesses resolve disputes with larger businesses and will help drive a culture change in payment practices.

Mr Uppal and his team will provide general advice and information to small businesses on matters such as resolving disputes, including signposting small businesses to existing support and dispute resolution services, which will be delivered through the commissioner's website. His priorities will reflect his 20-year experience as a small business owner in the real estate sector, where he saw how even sound businesses could struggle when faced with a culture of late payment by customers.

Mr Uppal said:

"Running your own business can be a very lonely experience and my priority will be ensuring small firms feel supported as well as helping to create an overall impression that business isn't necessarily cut throat.

"In fact, successful businesses are built on integrity, entrepreneurial spirit and trusting relationships and I want to highlight that Britain can be the best place in the world for new entrepreneurs to establish and grow their own businesses."

Business Secretary, Greg Clark, said:

"Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, providing jobs and opportunities across the country. I am delighted to announce Paul Uppal as the first Small Business Commissioner. His extensive experience as a small business owner makes him perfectly suited to champion the interests of small business and bring about a change in culture that will create a level playing field for everyone.

"Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, providing jobs and opportunities across the country. Supporting Britain's 5.5 million small businesses is at the heart of this Government's Industrial Strategy, and his ambition to tackle unfair payment practices will help support our goal to create an economy that works for all. I wish Paul luck in his new role, and I look forward to working with him in the future."

The appointment of the SBC builds on the Government's programme of support

for small business, since 2010 including:

- British Business Bank programmes supporting £3.4 billion of finance to over 59,000 smaller businesses;
- over 50,000 Start-Up Loans worth almost £340 million;
- a network of 39 local growth hubs which make it easier for start-ups and existing businesses to access the support they need; and
- an additional business rates package, announced at the Spring Budget, providing £435m of further support for businesses facing significant bills in England.

The office of the Small Business Commissioner is expected to be operational by the end of 2017.

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## **News story: Chief Executive announcement**

The SSR0 Board has extended its appreciation to Marcine for her leadership of the organisation, which included successfully setting up the organisation after it was established by parliament. Marcine leaves the organisation in a strong position. Neil Swift (the SSR0's Chief Operating Officer) has been named as Interim Chief Executive.

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## **Press release: Angler to pay £1,800 after unsuccessful appeal**

On 29 September 2017 at North Staffordshire Justice Centre, George Holland of Coppice Gardens, Stone, was ordered to pay fines and costs totalling £1,855.81 after a successful prosecution by the Environment Agency. Mr Holland was fined £660 for threatening behaviour, ordered to pay costs of £1,129.81 and a victim surcharge of £66.

Mr Holland was originally called to court on 24 April 2017 and was proved

guilty in absence for 4 offences. However, the case was reopened under a statutory declaration application from the defendant where he proceeded to enter a not guilty plea.

Mr Holland faced charges of wilfully obstructing a constable in the execution of his duty, fishing without a rod licence, failing to state his name when addressed by an Environment Agency enforcement officer and using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour causing that person to believe that imminent violence will be used against him.

Magistrates heard the case and again found Mr Holland guilty of all charges and issued a fine of £660 for threatening behaviour. While found guilty, he did not receive a further penalty for the additional charges. Mr Holland did not attend court on 29 September, so was again proved guilty in absence.

The offences took place on 23 August 2016 at Isaak Walton Fishery, Chebsey.

Andrew Eardley of the Environment Agency said:

It's good to see the courts taking instances of threatening behaviour against enforcement officers seriously and offenders being prosecuted. Thankfully cases where an angler is threatening are very rare; most anglers found without a licence, while not happy, admit they have been caught out.

The majority of anglers fish legally and purchase a rod licence. With an annual licence costing £30 it seems ridiculous that anglers risk a significant fine, and the very small minority feel it acceptable to threaten an enforcement officer.

Money from rod licence sales is invested in England's fisheries and is used to fund a wide range of projects to improve facilities for anglers including protecting stocks from illegal fishing, pollution and disease; restoring fish stocks through re-stocking; eradicating invasive species; and fish habitat improvements. Rod licence money is also used to fund the Angling Trust to provide information about fishing and to encourage participation in the sport.

You need a valid Environment Agency rod licence to fish for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel in England. [Buying a rod licence](#) is easy.

Anyone witnessing illegal fishing incidents in progress can report it directly to the Environment Agency hotline on 0800 80 70 60. Information on illegal fishing and environmental crime can also be reported anonymously to Crime stoppers on 0800 555 111 or [online](#).

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# Press release: Views sought on reward and return schemes for drinks containers

The government today [invited views](#) on how reward and return schemes for drinks containers could work in England by issuing a call for evidence.

More than eight million tonnes of plastic are discarded into the world's oceans each year, putting marine wildlife under serious threat.

Up to 80% of this is estimated to have been originally lost or discarded on land before washing out to sea, and plastic bottles are a particular concern – with figures showing just 57% of those sold in the UK in 2016 collected for recycling.

This compares to a record 90% of deposit-marked cans and bottles that were returned to dedicated recycling facilities in Denmark, and a return rate of almost 80% of beverage containers in South Australia, both of which have a form of deposit return scheme.

To improve these numbers and increase recycling, Environment Secretary Michael Gove has asked organisations and individuals to share their views with the government on the advantages and disadvantages of different types of reward and return schemes for plastic, metal and glass drinks containers that could help reduce the number of bottles entering our waterways.

The call for evidence opens today for four weeks and ministers have asked the Voluntary and Economic Incentives Working Group, set up as part of the [Litter Strategy](#), to accelerate its work and report back early in the New Year.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

We must protect our oceans and marine life from plastic waste if we are to be the first generation to leave our environment in a better state than we found it.

That means tackling the rise in plastic bottles entering our waters by making it simpler and easier to recycle and dispose of them appropriately.

Today we are launching a call for evidence to help us understand how reward and return schemes for plastic bottles and other drinks containers could work in England.

This approach has already seen great success in other countries such as Denmark in curbing plastic pollution and we want to hear people's ideas on how we could make it work in England.

This adds to the progress we have already made in cleaning up our oceans by significantly reducing plastic bag use and drawing up one of the world's toughest bans on plastic microbeads.

The evidence submitted will be examined by the government's working group which includes brand and retail giants such as Coca Cola and Tesco.

This builds on successful waste initiatives already launched by the government, including the [5p plastic bag charge](#) which has seen enormous success in changing consumer behaviour by reducing use by 83 per cent.

Some nine billion fewer carrier bags have been distributed since the charge was introduced, with more than £95million raised donated to environmental, educational and other good causes.

In addition, legislation for the government's [ban on microbeads](#) – welcomed by campaigners as one of the toughest in the world – will be introduced later this year and we are now assessing how best to tackle other sources of microplastics from polluting the seas.

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## **Press release: Next phase in rollout of Universal Credit confirmed**

The next stage of the rollout of Universal Credit to all claimants starts on Wednesday 4 October 2017.

Universal Credit is available in all jobcentres across the country to new single jobseekers and the government has been rolling out the [Universal Credit full service](#) to all new claimants, including families and people who cannot work.

In July, Universal Credit full service was successfully introduced to 29 jobcentres across the country, making a total of 101 jobcentres with Universal Credit full service. In October we will introduce it to a further 45 jobcentres across the country.

The [commencement order confirming those plans](#) was published today (2 October 2017).

Universal Credit replaces the complex old system of 6 main out-of-work benefits with one simple monthly payment and is paid the same way many working people are.

The expansion is in line with the planned, gradual, safe rollout of Universal Credit.

As a percentage of the total expected caseload on Universal Credit, the number of households claiming Universal Credit is expected to increase from 8% in September to 13% in March 2018.

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