

Independent report: John Penrose MP publishes proposals to strengthen UK's competition regime

- Independent report from John Penrose MP sets out proposals to boost competition to benefit businesses and consumers across the UK
- review considers how the UK's competition regime can be updated in the context of COVID-19 and the end of the transition period
- "A free-trading, global post-Brexit Britain should aim to have one of the best competition and consumer regimes in the world", Mr Penrose said

John Penrose MP has today (16 February) [published proposals to update the UK's competition and consumer regime](#).

In September 2020, Mr Penrose was invited by the government to conduct an independent review of UK competition policy, to see how it can be reformed as the country begins life as an independent trading nation and builds back better from COVID-19.

In his final report – Power to the People – Mr Penrose recommends measures to reform the UK's competition institutions for the digital age.

Mr Penrose brings a unique perspective from his experience in business, an understanding of everyday consumer issues from 15 years as a constituency MP, and long-running interest in the subject.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

The UK's competition laws and institutions are highly regarded across the globe, however as we build back better from the pandemic and start life as an independent trading nation, we have a golden opportunity to strengthen that reputation.

I want to thank John Penrose for his hard work on this independent report, which considers how the UK's competition regime can promote productivity, reward and encourage innovation and, most importantly, get consumers a better deal.

We will consider John's recommendations and respond in due course.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak said:

This government continues to champion British businesses as demonstrated by our unprecedented £280 billion package of support throughout the pandemic.

We must strengthen competition in our economy as we build back stronger from COVID-19 and protecting consumers will remain at the heart of this important work.

In his report, Mr Penrose outlines options to promote competition in the UK and to improve consumer confidence. This includes proposals to protect consumers from new kinds of rip-offs, and to ensure that they can expect fair treatment, particularly in online transactions.

Mr Penrose recommends further work to strengthen and speed up enforcement of consumer and competition law.

Mr Penrose's report complements recent government action on competition.

In November 2020, the government [announced the formation of a new Digital Markets Unit](#) to oversee a pro-competition regime for platforms including those funded by digital advertising, such as Google and Facebook.

John Penrose was appointed the Prime Minister's Anti-Corruption Champion in December 2017 and was reappointed in July 2019. He was previously a Minister of State in the Northern Ireland Office from November 2018 to July 2019. John was first elected as MP for Weston, Worle and the Villages in 2005.

Before entering Parliament, John had an extensive business career, which included roles at: J P Morgan (risk management on a bank trading floor), McKinsey (strategic management consultancy), Thompson (academic book publishing), and Pearson PLC (Managing Director of Longman's schoolbook publishing operations). John also helped found Credit Market Analysis (publishing credit data for financial firms).

[Say Hy to the home of the future](#)

- UK's first homes with appliances fuelled entirely by hydrogen will be built in Low Thornley, Gateshead, with funding from the government's Hy4Heat innovation programme, Northern Gas Networks and Cadent
- the houses include hydrogen appliances such as boilers, hobs, cookers and fires that release no carbon emissions – providing the public a glimpse into the potential home of the future
- demonstrates the potential of hydrogen energy to help achieve the government's ambitions to eliminate the UK's contribution to climate change by 2050

The UK's first homes with household appliances fuelled entirely by hydrogen are set to be built in Low Thornley, Gateshead, providing the public a glimpse into the potential home of the future where no carbon emissions are released.

The 2 semi-detached homes, funded with the help of the UK government's [Hy4Heat Innovation programme](#), will open in April 2021, showing how hydrogen has the potential to be used as a clean replacement to natural gas in the home.

The hydrogen house project is aligned with a larger scheme detailed in the Prime Minister's [Ten point plan](#) which also includes establishing a Hydrogen Neighbourhood, and to the development of plans for a potential Hydrogen Town before the end of this decade.

The houses will use 100% hydrogen for domestic heating and cooking in appliances including boilers, hobs, cookers and fires.

Unlike natural gas, which is responsible for over 30% of the UK's carbon emissions, hydrogen produces no carbon at the point of use, with the only by-product being water.

Hydrogen could play a vital role in achieving the government's commitment of eliminating the UK's contribution to climate change by 2050, with the industry creating up to 8,000 jobs across Britain's industrial heartlands and beyond by 2030, potentially unlocking up to 100,000 jobs by 2050.

Energy Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

From running a hot bath and cooking our evening meals to turning on the heating, most of us use natural gas every day. However, to tackle climate change, we need to find alternatives to fossil fuels and move towards making clean energy the norm.

While these new houses in Gateshead will look like any other, they will showcase how low carbon hydrogen can transform the way we power our homes and offer a glimpse of what the future holds as we build back greener.

The project secured a £250,000 grant from the government's [Hy4Heat Innovation programme](#) and is being run by gas company Northern Gas Networks and Cadent, who have both also input £250,000 of funding each.

The houses are planned to be open to members of the public, who will be able to view appliances and see how they compare to existing ones. Local schools, colleges and universities will also be welcomed to learn about the new technology, as well as potential careers in the emerging green economy and in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects.

Mark Horsley, Chief Executive Officer of Northern Gas Networks said:

We're delighted to be working with BEIS and Cadent on this unique demonstration, which gives energy customers a first glimpse at hydrogen technology in the home.

Just like natural gas, hydrogen can heat homes in exactly the same way, meaning minimal change for customers in terms of how they use gas for heating or cooking.

The houses bring to life the potential of this green gas for keeping UK homes warm, while minimising impact on the environment.

Steve Fraser, Chief Executive Officer at Cadent said:

We are proud to be part of this important project where we will be able to show customers what their future gas appliances will look like. A familiar sight to them, with one difference, they will be powered by hydrogen.

These projects are so important to demonstrate a decarbonised energy solution in homes now.

Today's announcement comes ahead of government plans to publish its Hydrogen Strategy later this year, which will outline plans to build a UK hydrogen economy.

The hydrogen houses are intended to have a 3-year lifespan, but potentially longer, up to 10 years. They are not intended to be habitable, but to showcase the use of hydrogen fuelled applications in a real-world domestic setting.

The innovative hydrogen appliances have been produced with support from the government's Hy4heat innovation programme.

The 2 hydrogen houses are being built at Northern Gas Networks' site in Low Thornley, Gateshead.

[Culture Secretary appoints Blondel Cluff CBE as Chair of the National Lottery Community Fund](#)

The role will see her set the long-term strategic direction for the largest funder of community activity in the UK, working with charities to enable people and communities to thrive.

During 2020 it distributed over £650 million, thanks to National Lottery players, delivering support to more than 13,000 community groups as part of the coronavirus response. Beneficiaries ranged from radio shows for patients

in hospital to aid their recovery, to online music sessions for children and young people, helping tackle lockdown loneliness.

Growing up within a family from Anguilla, Blondel has been a solicitor for more than 35 years, holding a number of high level public roles focused on communities, education, health and heritage over the past two decades.

She was co-opted to the Prime Minister's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, with a focus on education, and is a member of the Windrush Cross Government Working Group, led by the Home Office.

Blondel recently retired from diplomatic service, having represented the British Overseas Territory of Anguilla, supporting the territory through Hurricane Irma, constitutional reform and in its preparations for Brexit as a border nation of the EU.

She remains as CEO of the West India Committee, a UK registered charity and Royal Charter institution that is the custodian of a UNESCO inscribed library and collection on the Caribbean and is a Consulting NGO of UNESCO on small island developing nations and heritage. During the past six years, she has served as chair of the National Lottery Heritage Fund's London and South Committee and also chaired the London Committee of its predecessor, the Heritage Lottery Fund.

In 2018 she received a CBE for services to numismatic design and for her work with the Caribbean community in the UK and abroad.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

Over the past year, the National Lottery Community Fund has distributed hundreds of millions of pounds to support our dedicated charities playing a huge role in the national effort against coronavirus, providing a lifeline to vulnerable people across the country.

I am delighted to appoint Blondel as its new Chair. Her extensive background in charity and community work means she is ideally placed to ensure Lottery funding helps us build back stronger from the pandemic and reflects the needs of people right across the UK.

Blondel Cluff CBE said:

Communities are the very lifeblood of a nation and, as such, I am honoured to have the opportunity to support them as Chair of the National Lottery Community Fund at such an important time for us all.

As per legislation the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has formal responsibility for the appointment of the members of the

Board.

Ministers were assisted in their decision-making by an Advisory Assessment Panel which included a departmental official and a senior independent panel member approved by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

She will replace interim chair Tony Burton CBE.

ENDS

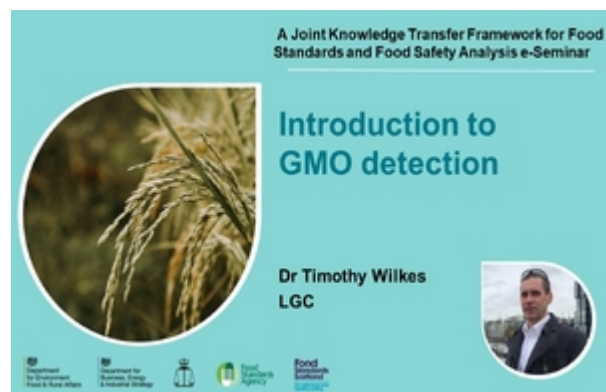
Notes to editors:

- The National Lottery Community Fund is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.
- Blondel Cluff will hold the post of Chair of the National Lottery Community Fund from 1 February 2021 to 1 February 2025. Remuneration for the new NLCF Chair will be £40,000 per annum for up to two days a week.
- She is a Fellow of King's College London, where she was a member of the college council for several years, focusing on institutional change, governance and investment.
- Blondel is a member of the Royal Mint Advisory Committee that is responsible for the themes and designs depicted on Britain's coinage. An author of various works on the Caribbean, Blondel regularly lectures on history and heritage.
- This appointment process was run in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.
- Blondel was asked to declare any significant political activity undertaken in the last five years. This is defined as holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election. She has not declared any activity.

[GMO Detection e-seminar](#)

News story

Introduction to the subject of GMO detection in food and feed samples, and advice and guidance on the application of DNA-based analytical methods



This e-seminar by Dr Timothy Wilkes (Researcher at the National Measurement Laboratory, LGC) includes topics such as legislation relevant to the regulation of GMOs, DNA-based detection methods, bioinformatic tools and decision support systems, as well as guidance on the sourcing of appropriate analytical reference materials.

The e-seminar is intended for individuals working in official control laboratories, the food industry and those involved with the UK official control system.

The production of this e-seminar was co-funded by the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, [Defra](#), the [Food Standards Agency](#), [Food Standards Scotland](#) and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, [BEIS](#) via the Government Chemist, under the Joint Knowledge Transfer Framework for Food Standards and Food Safety Analysis.

Please note that this e-seminar was recorded in 2020 i.e. prior to the end of the period of transition for the process of the UK leaving the European Union.

[GMO detection e-seminar](#)

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[Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus \(COVID-19\): 15 February 2021](#)

Today the national vaccination programme continues to power past the target we set six weeks ago with more than 15 million people vaccinated across the

UK.

And once again I pay tribute to the astonishing efforts of everyone involved – the GPs, the nurses, the volunteers, the army and the pharmacists like Hardik Desai – who rallied local volunteers to vaccinate 3,000 people in his village hall in Ticehurst in Sussex, while keeping his pharmacy open – and of course I thank all of you who have come forward to be vaccinated.

This is an unprecedented national achievement but it's no moment to relax and in fact it's the moment to accelerate because the threat from this virus remains very real.

Yes, it's true, we have vaccinated more than 90 per cent of those aged over 70 but don't forget that 60 per cent of hospital patients with Covid are under 70.

And although the vaccination programme is going well, we still don't have enough data about the exact effectiveness of the vaccines in reducing the spread of infection.

We have some interesting straws in the wind. We have grounds for confidence. But the vaccinations have only been running for a matter of weeks – and while we are learning the whole time – we don't today have all the hard facts that we need.

And the level of infection remains very high, with more people still in hospital today than at the peak last April and admissions running at 1,600 a day.

So we have to keep our foot to the floor. And I can tell you today that the next million letters are landing on people's mats right now, offering appointments to the over-65s and we are also contacting all those aged between 16 and 64 with underlying health conditions, as well as adult carers.

And if we can keep this pace up – and if we can keep supply steady – and I hope and believe we can – then we hope to offer a vaccination to everyone in the first nine priority groups – including everyone over 50 – by the end of April.

And at the same time we will be giving second doses to millions of the most vulnerable within twelve weeks of the first.

So this moment is a huge step forward but it's only a first step.

And while it shows what the country can do we must be both optimistic but also patient.

And next week I will be setting out a roadmap saying as much as we possibly can about the route to normality even though some things are very uncertain.

Because we want this lockdown to be the last. And we want progress to be cautious but also irreversible.

So please continue to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

Thank you.