

Press release: LPC publishes its recommendations to tackle one-sided flexibility

Today the Government has published the Low Pay Commission's (LPC) recommendations to tackle one-sided flexibility. In addition to our usual brief recommending the minimum wage rates, the LPC was also asked to undertake some additional tasks in relation to the Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices. These were to review the scale and nature of the issue of 'one-sided flexibility', to assess the impact of introducing a higher minimum wage for non-guaranteed hours and consider alternative policy ideas.

We found evidence of one-sided flexibility as identified in the Taylor Review: the misuse by some employers of flexible working arrangements creating unpredictability, insecurity of income and a reluctance among some workers to assert basic employment rights. However, we also found evidence of positive examples of flexibility and believe it is important to preserve genuine two-way flexibility.

Commissioners thought that the higher minimum wage for non-guaranteed hours did not address one-sided flexibility effectively and had the potential to create many unintended consequences. We did not hear unqualified backing for the premium from any of the stakeholders we spoke to. We have therefore recommended an alternative package of measures.

- A right to switch to a contract which reflects your normal hours. This is not about a worker requesting a change to the amount of work they do, but rather proper recognition of their normal hours. We believe this will help to tackle the fear of employer retaliation by providing a guarantee of the worker's normal hours. Workers already worried about raising issues in the workplace are less likely to raise a 'request' so the right needs to be stronger than this.
- A right to reasonable notice of work schedule – to encourage employers to provide workers with their work schedule in advance so that individuals can plan their lives.
- Compensation for shift cancellation or curtailment without reasonable notice – to discourage employers from cancelling shifts at the last minute or partway through a shift.
- Information to workers – the written statement of terms from employers should detail the rights we are proposing here.

We also recommend that the Government considers ways to specifically measure the scale of one-sided flexibility.

Chair of the LPC Bryan Sanderson said:

We agree that one-sided flexibility is a problem and have

recommended a package of measures to address the issue. We found the problems were not specific to one form of contract but can happen across of range of working arrangements.

We are pleased to see that the Government will consider our recommendation for a right to switch to a contract that reflects normal working hours as it develops legislation on the 'right to request a more stable contract', and that it will consult on our other proposals.

Notes:

1. The Low Pay Commission is an independent body made up of employers, trade unions and experts whose role is to advise the Government on the minimum wage. The National Living Wage is the legally binding pay floor for workers aged 25 and over. The other minimum wage rates comprise: the 21-24 Year Old Rate, the 18-20 Year Old Rate, the 16-17 Year Old Rate and the Apprentice Rate.
2. The LPC's extended remit from Government was to 'assess the nature and extent of the issue identified in the Review; and to assess the impact of introducing a higher minimum wage for non-guaranteed hours. This assessment should consider any alternative policies that they consider address the same issue, including relevant international comparisons and evidence provided by stakeholders.'
3. The LPC provided its recommendations to the Government by 31 October, in line with the timetable set out in its remit.
4. The Government responded to the LPC's recommendations in its Good Work Plan, also published on 17 December 2018. It said: "We welcome the Commission's work and recommendations which are published alongside this document. As set out in this Good Work Plan, the Government remains determined to tackle one-sided flexibility while retaining the flexibility that many people find so valuable. For example, we are taking action by introducing a right to request a more stable contract. The Commission had specific views on this policy, which we will consider as we develop legislation. Alongside this, we will consult on the Low Pay Commission's other proposals."
5. The LPC refer to the higher minimum wage for non-guaranteed hours as the 'premium'.

Press release: UK deepens climate change partnership with Pacific Islands

- Pacific Islands, including Fiji, Vanuatu, and the Marshall Islands are on the frontline of climate change and are already facing rising sea levels that could undermine livelihoods, security and human rights.
- the UK is playing a leading role at the UN Secretary General's climate conference in 2019 to accelerate the transition to a climate resilient planet.
- to date, the UK has invested over £70 million in the Pacific, focusing on strengthening climate resilience and addressing security issues.

Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry has emphasised the UK's commitment to support the Pacific Islands in combating climate change.

Opening the UK/New Zealand Wilton Park Forum on Climate Change and Resilience in the Pacific yesterday (16 December 2018), Claire Perry championed climate vulnerable nations and reminded governments, businesses, and international organisations everywhere of their absolute duty to tackle the biggest threat of our time.

The event, jointly hosted by the UK, New Zealand and the Pacific Island Forum, turned discussions and recommendations into practical solutions in areas including multilateral negotiations, oceans, plastics, finance, risk assessment and migration, deepened engagement between the UK and Pacific Island leaders and promoted new stakeholder partnerships to enhance future collaboration.

Speaking at the Forum, Energy and Clean Growth Minister Claire Perry said:

The Pacific Islands are small, but they are mighty. Despite hardly contributing to climate change, they are driving international action to reduce emissions and building the resilience of their communities. We can learn so much from them.

With the UK's world-leading expertise in tackling climate change and the Pacific Islands' determination, we will work closely together to find practical solutions and drive transformational change.

The UK has a longstanding relationship with the Pacific Islands and a shared agenda on Climate Change. During the COP24 summit in Poland last week, Claire

Perry launched the UK's new Capacity Building for international negotiations Programme (CaBIN). The £15.6 million technical assistance programme will increase the capacity of low income and climate vulnerable countries to become leading voices in international climate negotiations.

In addition, the government is providing £1.2 million in funding to support a Pacific Regional Nationally Determined Contributions Hub to support these countries in implementing their Paris Agreement commitments.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister responsible for Climate Change, Mark Field, welcomed the delegates at the beginning of the Forum:

The countries of the Pacific are at the forefront of the fight against climate change and we have much to learn from one another.

Failure to recognise that these challenges are coming down to the line, and to find ways to mitigate them, or to sufficiently adapt to them, in advance, is no longer an option.

Throughout COP24, the UK cemented its position as a global leader in tackling climate change and achieved:

- driving genuine climate action to ensure a level playing-field for every country and doing its bit to secure a robust rulebook that applies to all nations
- urging higher global ambition, by ensuring the Talanoa Dialogue, which takes stock of collective global efforts to reduce emissions in line with the Paris Agreement, results in a firm commitment from all countries to review and update their international Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
- continuing to play an active role in the negotiations while promoting UK experience and showcasing the scale and impact of UK International Climate Finance (ICF)
- since 1990 the UK economy has grown by 71 per cent while emissions have fallen by 43 per cent – the fastest progress on decarbonisation in the G20 since 2000

[News story: Changes to how we value some non-domestic properties with more than one occupier in England](#)



We have revised how we value properties in England where occupiers use two or more separated spaces within a building. We can now value separate but adjoining areas (occupied by one individual or company) as a single property when it is appropriate.

Ratepayers can ask us to reconsider when we have previously split a property into more than one.

- For current valuations, use the [check and challenge](#) process and follow the guidance to notify us that the check is related to the 'Mazars' case.
- For valuations that were split between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2017 inclusive, use our revised [2010 appeal form](#). You can do this from 17 December 2018 to 31 December 2019.

Until we have reviewed the decision, you should continue to pay any additional business rates liability to your council. We will automatically let the council know about any changes to the valuations we make. The decision in the Supreme Court case 'Mazars vs Woolway' meant we were legally obliged to treat different areas of the same building (which are accessed through communal areas) as separate premises for business rates purposes. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced, in the Autumn Budget 2017, his commitment to alter the rating law in England to enable us to treat these as a single property when appropriate. This legislation came into effect on 1 November 2018. The regulations that allow us to amend the 2010 list came into effect on 17 December 2018.

We have updated the Rating Manual [section 2 part 5](#) and [section 7 part 2](#) to reflect this change in legislation.

The [previous guidance on how we value some non-domestic properties with more than one occupier](#) still applies in Wales.

Published 17 December 2018

Press release: No escape for company bosses responsible for nuisance calls



New legislation comes into force which means the UK data protection watchdog, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), can now hold company bosses directly responsible. Previously some had liquidated their firms to avoid big penalties.

Minister for Digital Margot James said:

There is now no hiding place for the small minority of rogue directors who have previously tried to escape justice. We are determined to stamp this menace out and this new law is the latest in a series of measures to rid society of the plague of nuisance calls.

Estimates by Ofcom show British consumers were bombarded with 3.9 billion nuisance phone calls and texts last year. Previously it was only the businesses themselves that were liable for fines of up to £500,000 rather than individuals. Some directors escaped paying by declaring bankruptcy only to open up again under a different name. Now the ICO can hold company directors directly responsible with further fines of up to half a million pounds.

Andy Curry, who heads up the nuisance call enforcement team at the Information Commissioner's Office, said:

We welcome this amendment to the law which will increase the tools we have to protect the public. It will mean we can recover the fine more easily and also make it much harder for unscrupulous operators to set up in business again.

This new legislation is the latest in a long line of measures designed to put an end to unwanted calls and texts. Complaints to the ICO and Ofcom about nuisance calls have fallen for the second year in a row suggesting the action taken is working.

The Government has already:

- Introduced a measure in the Digital Economy Act 2017 to make it a requirement for the Information Commissioner to issue a statutory code of practice on direct marketing;
- Amended the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (PECR) to require all direct marketing callers to provide Caller Line Identification;
- Lowered the legal threshold at which the ICO may impose a monetary penalty on organisations breaching PECR;
- Made it easier for the ICO to more effectively share information with Ofcom in relation to nuisance calls through an amendment to the Communications Act 2003;
- Given the ICO the power to issue monetary penalty notices up to £500,000 for serious breaches of PECR;
- Introduced a ban on cold calling in relation to claims management services through the Financial Claims and Guidance Act 2018, except where the receiver has consented to such calls being made to them. The 2018 Act also includes powers to ban cold calls from pension providers; and
- Given £500,000 to Trading Standards to help install call blocking devices installed in the homes of vulnerable people.

Further Information:

1. For more information call DCMS Press Office on 0207 211 2210
2. ICO will consider the level of fine based on evidence- (whether it applies to company, director or both).
3. If a firm has multiple directors, each could be liable for a fine.
4. In 2016/17, the Information Commissioner issued 23 companies with more than £1.9million of fines for nuisance marketing.

Published 17 December 2018

Press release: Toll free Severn provides festive boost for communities and business

Drivers can travel for free across both the Prince of Wales and original Severn Crossing for the first time in 52 years from this morning (Monday 17 December). The abolition of the tolls, following an announcement by the UK Government last year, comes as thousands of people are expected to make their journeys home for the festive period.

The tolls' removal will save regular commuters around £1400 per year and provide an estimated annual boost of over £100m for the Welsh economy. Businesses will also benefit from strengthened links between communities ranging from west Wales to the south west of England by making it easier for consumers and employees to cross the border.

Tolls have been charged on the Severn Crossings since 1966, and the final driver to pay to cross over from England to Wales (on Sunday 16 December) was the Welsh Secretary, Alun Cairns.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

The end of the tolls is a major milestone for the economies of south Wales and south west of England, and will remove historic barriers between communities. Scrapping the tolls means an end to generations of people paying to simply cross the border, and delivering this has been one of my key aims as Welsh Secretary.

A week before Christmas drivers will no longer have to pay every time they cross the border, meaning more money in their pockets, helping them with the cost of living and leaving them with and more cash to spend in their local areas.

Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling said:

We made a commitment in the manifesto to deliver free crossings over the Severn and that's exactly what we're delivering.

This move will put £1,400 a year in the pockets of thousands of hard-working motorists and help transform the economy in the South West and South Wales creating new opportunities and helping drive future growth.

ENDS