

## **News story: HMRC and National Trading Standards agree to share information on estate agencies**

From:

First published:

16 February 2017

New procedures will streamline co-operation and ease the flow of information.

HMRC and the National Trading Standards Estate Agency Team have agreed new procedures for using existing legal gateways, which will enhance and ease the current flow of information on estate agency businesses between both parties.

Estate agency businesses must register under money laundering regulations and for property redress schemes. Most operate within the legislation to protect the financial system and consumers.

This agreement, effective from January 2017, will streamline our co-operation and information exchange, whilst making it more difficult for non-compliant estate agency businesses to operate outside the Money Laundering Regulations 2007 and Estate Agency Act 1979.

The agreement will enable both parties to target areas of risk, those who are trading without registering appropriately and those who may not be meeting their obligations.

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## **News story: Further decisions on reviews of marking, reviews of moderation, and appeals**

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Changes to arrangements for reviews and appeals in GCSEs, AS and A levels

Ofqual has today (16 February) announced a number of decisions about the future arrangements for reviews of marking, reviews of moderation, and appeals services.

The exams regulator for England announced in July 2016 a number of decisions related to how it intended to make the systems schools and colleges use to challenge GCSE, AS and A level results in England clearer, more consistent, and fairer for all students. Today's decisions were deferred at that time so that more evidence could be gathered about their potential impact. In light of feedback from a range of stakeholders, Ofqual has decided:

- to introduce the requirement for exam boards to make marked GCSE scripts available to centres, before their deadline for requesting a review of marking, for the summer 2020 exam series onwards
- to introduce the requirement for exam boards to provide the reasons for review of marking decisions automatically for the summer 2020 exam series onwards
- to introduce the requirement for exam boards to grant learners the ability to request results of centre-marked assessments for the summer 2018 exam series onwards
- to defer implementation of the removal of automatic grade protection that currently applies, following a review of moderation for at least two years. During this time, we will review the approaches exam boards take to moderation before deciding whether to remove this protection

Ofqual has announced requirements for key dates for the completion of reviews and appeals. These will ensure common, minimum timelines for centres and students.

A final decision regarding extending the grounds for appeal will be taken later this Spring once analysis of a pilot study has been completed. Official statistics on GCSE, AS and A level result appeals will be published on 21 March 2016.

Ofqual has also launched a [survey for teachers about their experience of the review of marking and moderation services](#) (formerly known as EARs).

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**[News story: Alok Sharma marks 45 years](#)**

# of UK-China Ambassadorial ties

In Beijing on Thursday 16 February, Mr Sharma met Chinese Assistant Foreign Ministers Liu Haixing and Kong Xuanyou for wide-ranging political talks to strengthen the global partnership between the UK and China. The Minister emphasised the UK's support for China's Belt and Road Initiative and explored opportunities to develop closer infrastructure and finance partnerships.

The Minister's visit to Beijing follows a three-day tour of south China, leading a delegation of UK healthcare and life science business leaders to Guangzhou, Fuzhou and Xiamen. The delegation showcased world class UK expertise and explored trade and collaboration opportunities across the region.

Speaking at a reception in Beijing, Mr Sharma said:

Throughout the last 45 years, the UK-China relationship has been steadily strengthening. Personal ties and mutual understanding are at the heart of any successful relationship. That is why promoting business, cultural and educational links is so important to us. Forty-five years ago, there were 200 Chinese students in the UK and today we welcome over 150,000 Chinese students at universities, colleges and schools across the UK. Through our Generation UK programme, we are working to increase the number of British students studying in China from 5000 currently to 20,000 by 2020.

As we look ahead to the future for the UK and China, it is important to reflect on what our two countries have achieved over the last 45 years. Trade is clearly a key element of our partnership. In 45 years, trade between our two countries has increased by an incredible 200-fold to CNY 553 billion. We want to do even more. We are also working together to address some of the significant challenges facing the world today, such as conflict in the Middle East and international terrorism. Our Infrastructure Alliance will allow us to work together to build the capacity of third countries, and we are tackling global health issues such as anti-microbial resistance.

An anniversary is always a good moment to reflect on our past achievements. This one is no exception. In the past 45 years since our countries established diplomatic full diplomatic relations, the pace and scope of what we have achieved individually and together is extraordinary.

## **Further information**

Follow Foreign Office Minister Alok Sharma on twitter [@AlokSharma\\_RDG](#)

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## **News story: UK urges Coalition to maintain momentum against Daesh**

With Daesh losing in both Iraq and Syria, Ministers considered the Coalition campaign plan for 2017. This included plans for the operation to liberate Western Mosul, which the Defence Secretary reviewed with the Iraqi Prime Minister and Defence Minister during his visit to Iraq last weekend. With eastern Mosul recently liberated by Iraqi forces, operations to free the west of the city from Daesh's tyranny will start shortly.

The RAF has been in action, striking Daesh around the approaches to the city in recent weeks ahead of the launch of the operation, including sinking a Daesh heavy machine gun team last week on a boat on the River Tigris. On Tuesday careful surveillance operations allowed a building on the north-western outskirts of Mosul to be identified as a Daesh headquarters. With Iraqi forces keeping close watch from across the Tigris, a flight of Typhoons were able to conduct a highly accurate attack late at night – two Paveway IVs demolished the target.

### **RAF Typhoons bomb a Daesh HQ**

RAF fast jets and remotely piloted aircraft have now carried out over 1,200 airstrikes against Daesh, second only to the United States in numbers of Coalition strikes.

In Syria, where the picture is more complicated, the Defence Secretary confirmed that by spring the operation to isolate Raqqa, the last major city Daesh holds in Syria, would be complete. It is expected that thereafter the liberation of the city itself will begin.

As the fight against Daesh enters a new phase, Ministers reviewed Coalition requests to make the training effort more flexible. The Defence Secretary last month authorised UK personnel to deliver training at secured and protected locations in Iraq, in addition to the training sites at Taji, Al Asad, Besmayah and Irbil, where personnel are already deployed. By training forward Britain will now deliver the infantry skills, counter-IED, combat first aid and bridge-building training where Iraqi forces need it. British forces previously mentored Iraqi forces carrying out bridge building ahead of the liberation of eastern Mosul.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Daesh is losing ground, fighters, and funding. Now we need to keep up the pressure on Mosul and Raqqa to deal Daesh a decisive blow. Britain will continue playing its leading role providing vital intelligence, precision airstrikes, and training Iraqi forces where they need it.

The meeting of Coalition Defence Ministers took place following discussions the day before on what more NATO would do to protect its southern borders. Sir Michael confirmed that Britain will send a UK military officer to help lead NATO's newly established training and capacity building mission in Iraq. This effort will help Iraqis defeat Daesh with training including in countering explosive devices. This commitment builds on the work that Britain is already doing in the country, where, we are helping to train Iraqi forces at an unprecedented level, with over 3,000 being trained a month.

Read more about UK activity against Daesh [here](#)

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## **Press release: Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Paraguay**

From:

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Part of:

Mr Matthew Hedges has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to Paraguay

Mr Matthew Hedges has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to Paraguay in succession to Dr Jeremy Hobbs, who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Hedges will take up his appointment in August 2017.

### **Curriculum Vitae**

Full name Matthew James Hedges

2015 – 2016 Princeton University, Master in Public Policy – International Relations

2012 – 2015 Rangoon, Deputy Head of Mission

2009 – 2012 Tokyo, Head of Political Section

2008 – 2009 Turks & Caicos Islands, Head of Governor's Office

2006 – 2008 House of Commons, International Development Select Committee, Senior Clerk

2005 Basra, Head of Chancery  
2005 – 2006 FC0, Team Leader, EU Constitutional Treaty/Future of Europe, EU Directorate  
2001 – 2005 Rabat, Second Secretary Political  
2000 UK Mission to the UN in New York, Adviser  
1999 – 2000 FC0, Desk Officer, NATO Enlargement, Security Policy Department  
1999 Joined FC0

## **Further information**