News story: Article 50 Bill process begins

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The European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill has been introduced to the House of Commons today, by Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union David Davis.

The straightforward Bill, which gives the Prime Minister the power to formally trigger Article 50, is expected to move through both the House of Commons and House of Lords before gaining Royal Assent prior to the March 31st deadline.

The Bill comes ahead of the introduction of the Great Repeal Bill, that will transpose EU law into UK law to ensure the maximum stability on exit, with changes to the law requiring the full consent of Parliament.

Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union David Davis said:

> The British people have made the decision to leave the EU and this government is determined to get on with the job of delivering it.
>
> So today we have introduced a Bill in Parliament which will allow us to formally trigger Article 50 by the end of March.
>
> I trust that Parliament, which backed the referendum by six to one, will respect the decision taken by the British people and pass the legislation quickly.

The Bill is being introduced following the judgment handed down by the Supreme Court earlier this week. It can be found here.

The latest crime statistics show the

true scale of the challenge our officers now face – Diane Abbott

Diane Abbott MP, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, speaking after the release of police workforce statistics, said:

"With over 20,000 officers lost since 2010, the Tories are risking public safety with these extreme cuts.

"They slashed police budgets in the last Parliament and are reducing funding even further now.

"The latest crime statistics show the true scale of the challenge our officers now face. This is the worst time to cut the police."

It is clear that the Tories' rigged economy simply isn't delivering for the majority of people in Britain – Rebecca Long-Bailey

Rebecca Long-Bailey MP, Labour's Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury, responding to GDP figures published today, said:

"While we welcome today's Q4 GDP figures, growth for 2016 as a whole is lower than 2015, and lower than forecast by the OBR just two months ago in the Autumn Statement. It is clear that the Tories' rigged economy simply isn't delivering for the majority of people in Britain. Prices are rising but earnings are still below where they were before the financial crash. As a result, we have extremely high levels of household debt as people struggle to make ends meet on incomes alone.

"Manufacturing is bumping along without proper support from government to power it through Brexit, even the Bank of England acknowledged recently that our economy was being driven by consumer spending rather than trade and export.
This is clearly not a Government serious about making sure that we support British industry and claim a prestigious place at the world's table as we leave the

European Union.

"Labour will fix our rigged economy with a real living wage, expected to be £10 an hour by 2020, and the long-term, patient investment we need to make sure that businesses thrive and that nobody and no community is left behind.”

News story: Government commits to ensuring new and expectant mothers have sufficient protections from redundancy

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Today the government is committing to making sure new and expectant mothers have sufficient protections from redundancy in the workplace.

In a response to a report by the Women and Equalities Select Committee on pregnancy and maternity discrimination, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy said it will consult in due course on options to ensure new and expectant mothers in work have sufficient protections from redundancy.

Business Minister Margot James said:

> We are determined to tackle pregnancy and maternity discrimination and a key part of that is making sure new and expectant mothers are supported and treated fairly by their employers.
>
> While most businesses abide by the law, some do not. There should be zero tolerance of discrimination against pregnant women, or women who have just given birth, that’s why today we are committing to making sure new and expectant mothers have sufficient protections from redundancy.
>
> I’d like to thank the Women and Equalities Select Committee for shining a light on this issue which is a key priority of mine.

The government has also committed to considering what further guidance can be provided to both courts and claimants about existing flexibilities in the employment tribunal system to extend the time limit for bringing a case.

The 3-month time limit for bringing a case can be extended when the independent employment tribunal decides it is “just and equitable” to do so.

News story: £64 million government funding to encourage more cycling and walking to work

Thousands more people will be encouraged to cycle and walk to work thanks to a £64 million government investment, Transport Minister Andrew Jones announced today (26 January 2017).

The funding will support local projects over 3 years from 2017 to 2020 and form part of a wider government package of more than £300 million to boost walking and cycling during the current parliament. By 2040 the government aims to make this part of everyday life and walking and cycling the natural choice for shorter journeys.

The money will deliver:

- more safety and awareness training for cyclists
- extra secure cycle storage
- bike repair and maintenance courses
- road safety measures
- mapping information for pedestrians
- real time bus information through smart phone apps or information at bus stops
- increased focus on car sharing clubs

The funding will also target those looking to get back into work because access to transport and the cost of travel often restricts where people can look for work and their ability to attend interviews. They will also benefit from discount bus travel and bike loans.

Transport Minister Andrew Jones said:

> We are committed to improving how people travel and this investment will ensure that people’s journeys are cheaper, safer and better for the environment. It will help people to become more active and better transport planning will reduce congestion on our roads – particularly at peak times.

> This investment will also help people access jobs, education and training – specifically targeting those looking to get back into work, as part of our relentless drive to make this is a country that works for everyone.

The funding could lead to:

- 95 million fewer miles in car journeys
- 99,000 extra walking trips per day
- 40,000 extra cycling trips per day

Stephen Joseph, Chief Executive, Campaign for Better Transport said:

> We strongly welcome this announcement of the access fund projects and the new cycling and walking to work fund. The evidence suggests that these kinds of projects can remove barriers to work, help local communities and businesses and also tackle local transport problems by giving people attractive alternatives to car use. We look forward to working with the government, the authorities involved, and other organisations to develop and learn from these projects.

All English transport authorities (outside London) were invited to bid for the funding. The following 25 successful local authority bidders will each receive a share of the £60 million Sustainable Travel Access Fund for 2017 to 2020:

Local Authority	Award (£million)
Blackpool Council – Consortium bid with Buckinghamshire CC, Hertfordshire CC, North East CA, Stoke on Trent CC, West Sussex CC, Hampshire CC, Leicester CC, North Lincolnshire Council and Surrey CC	7.498
Brighton and Hove Council	1.485
Bristol City Council (West of England)	6.901
Devon County Council	1.5
East Riding of Yorkshire Council	0.682
East Sussex County Council	1.2
Herefordshire County Council	1.5
Isle of Wight Council	1.35
Kent County Council	1.452
Lancashire County Council – Joint bid with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council	1.94
Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council	3.195
Lincolnshire County Council	0.975
Luton Borough Council (joint bid with Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council)	2.128

Local Authority	Award (£million)
Norfolk County Council	1.488
North East Lincolnshire Council	1.388
North Yorkshire County Council	0.974
Nottingham City Council – joint bid with Derby City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council	2.735
Nottinghamshire County Council	0.845
Plymouth City Council	1.497
Sheffield City Region Combined Authority	7.5
Slough Borough Council	1.5
Southampton City Council (joint bid with Hampshire County Council)	2.294
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council joint bid with -Thurrock Council and Essex County Council	3.322
Tees Valley Combined Authority	3.323
York, City of	1.312

The Cycling and Walking to Work Fund offers £3.8 million to be invested in 3 city regions over the next 12 months to connect people with employment and apprenticeships:

Local Authority	Award (£million)
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	1.5
Liverpool City Region	0.77
West Yorkshire Combined Authority	1.5