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Weekly Monitoring
Friday 14th July



Political Update

Following a meeting with President Joe Biden at Downing Street, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has spent most of the week in Lithuania attending a NATO Summit discussing the future of Ukraine's NATO membership. Whilst this side of the Atlantic, President Biden also met with King Charles to discuss climate change, a topic close to the King's heart.

Elsewhere, UK pay has grown faster than expected as British corporate profits surge to the second highest in the G7, with the Government accepting proposals to offer over one million public sector workers a pay rise of between 5% - 7%. The British Medical Association have rejected the offer on behalf of their members, whereas the teacher's union are expected to accept the increased wages.

News

Department for Transport unveil new global taskforce to bolster resilience in aviation taskforce

The Department for Transport launched a UK-led global taskforce at the International Civil Aviation Organisation's (ICAO) Gender Summit in Spain to boost careers in the aviation sector. Building on the success of the government's existing domestic programme Generation Aviation, which aims to build a resilient and diverse workforce fit for the future, the UK is partnering with Airport Council International (ACI World), International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the International Coordinating Council of Aerospace

Industries Associations (ICCAIA) – demonstrating the importance of international collaboration to address global skills in aviation and aerospace.

Alongside other countries and industry, the taskforce will aim to inspire the next generation to pursue careers in aviation and will retain and upskill the current workforce, as well as promote diversity.

UK and Spain sign an agreement on education cooperation

On Monday 3 July, the UK and Spain completed the signing of a UK-Spain bilateral agreement on cooperation in matters of education and access to university and other higher education institutions. This follows the close collaboration between Spain's Ministry of Education and Vocational Training and Ministry of Universities in Spain and the UK Department for Education and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

Key changes planned to Labour's policies

Labour policy chiefs are recommending the party makes more than 100 changes to a draft blueprint setting out its detailed policy programme.

LabourList obtained a leaked list of 121 recommended amends to Labour's current draft policy platform to be debated later this month by party representatives at a summit.

Proposed additions include commitments to ending "punitive" benefit sanctions, making Brexit work better by removing UK-EU "administrative burdens", making the NHS app a "one-stop shop" for patient information, extending freedom-of-information laws, supporting council housebuilding, reforming "suspicion-less" stop-and-search at protests, a smoking crackdown and nationalising railways not only as contracts expire, but also if firms breach contracts by failing to deliver.

Another change reaffirms Labour's commitment to workers' rights reforms. But a policy chiefs recommend cutting a reference to "endemic low pay, insecurity and lack of progression" in care, hospitality and retail, for fear of "alienating" firms when Labour must be "demonstrably the party of business".

If approved at the final meeting of NPF representatives in Nottingham the weekend after next, policy positions will be voted on at annual conference and then form "part of the final party programme", according to other internal documents before the final general election manifesto is confirmed.

Retail and logistics firms join drive to fill vacancies with prison leavers

'Unlocking Retail and Logistics' events were held in over 30 prisons across England and Wales with the aim of helping British businesses fill some of the estimated 1 million vacancies in the UK by employing qualified prison leavers. Events were run by businesses including supermarket giants The Cooperative and Iceland plus well-known retailers and logistic companies such as Oliver Bonas, Greggs, and DHL. The campaign is part of a wider drive from the government to get more prison leavers into work as evidence shows it grows the economy and cuts crime.

Government publishes response to Ethnicity pay reporting consultation

The Government has published its response to a consultation on ethnicity pay reporting, the consultation sought views on a mandatory approach to ethnicity pay reporting.

Government stated it does not believe that now is the right time to take forward a mandatory approach to ethnicity pay reporting. It is clear that a single reporting model may not work for all employers and that "a one-size fits all" approach to action-planning will not be appropriate in all circumstances. This consultation highlighted genuine difficulties in designing a methodology for ethnicity pay reporting, with mixed views on the best metric to use. It is therefore clear that it is not appropriate for the Government to mandate a particular methodology.

South Yorkshire names as first UK Investment Zone

The region of South Yorkshire encompassing Sheffield, Doncaster, Rotherham & Barnsley will benefit from £1.2 billion of private funding by 2030 and an estimated 8000 new jobs. This first Investment Zone is focused on Advanced Manufacturing, involving partnerships with Boeing, Spirit AeroSystems, Loop Technology and the University of Sheffield Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre. Speaking on the announcement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt MP stated:

"Our first Investment Zone is a shining example of how we will drive growth across the country."

"It's already secured more than £80 million of private investment, including backing from Boeing, and will help support more than 8,000 jobs by 2030."

Parliament

House of Commons

Petitions Debate on Increasing Employment Training

Conservative MP for Stroud, Siobhan Baillie put forward a debate in the House of Commons on Increasing Employment and Training. In her opening remarks she stated:

“We know that learning on the job is attractive to people of all ages. Learning at an older stage in life in an apprenticeship, so that we can earn and learn, is crucial to those of us with families and mortgages who need or want a career change. Yet unfortunately, the total number of apprenticeship starts has gone down to 349,000 in 2021-22, which is significantly below the 393,000 in 2018-19, and lower than the high of 500,000. Therefore, while the quality has definitely gone up, the starts are something that we need to look at, because they matter.

“The number of starts in SMEs has fallen by almost 50%, but small employers all over the shop, many of which I speak to locally, want to train up their own workers. As Policy Exchange explains in detail in its report, the requirement to pass English and Maths at level 2, which is a GCSE equivalent, means that somebody can be barred from achieving an apprenticeship qualification in bricklaying, childcare or IT due to a lack of achievement at school, which may have been years or decades ago. We desperately need these workers.”

Responding on behalf of the Government, Minister for Employment, Guy Opperman said:

“It is unquestionably the case that upskilling our workforce is the most important thing. We need to do that not least because we are trying to reduce unemployment and improve social inclusion, productivity and progression. [...] I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud that our over-50s offer has to get better. She will know that we have 37 over-50s champions in each region of the country, pioneering and driving forward real change in the attitude of employers and co-workers to older workers—some of us have inexplicably reached the age of 50 and need to ensure a supportive approach to that.

“There is no doubt that we need to drive forward the way in which employers look at employment. Why would a particular employer pay somebody to provide a service when the Department for Work and Pensions will provide training for

free through a skills bootcamp, a sector-based work academy, returneeships and all manner of other things?"

Women and Equalities Oral Questions

Shadow Minister for Equalities, Yasmin Qureshi MP asked the Business Secretary: "Under the Conservatives, just 12% of executive directors of FTSE 250 companies are women—a gap that will not close until 2058 at the current rate. Women who want to go into business cannot wait for the Conservatives to get their act together. They need a new deal for working people, a review of the gender pay gap, and a menopause action plan in the workplace. That is Labour's pro-business, pro-women plan to smash the glass ceiling and break down the barriers. Does the Minister have a plan?"

Business Secretary, Kemi Badenoch responded:

"I am afraid that the shadow Front-Bench spokeswoman is confusing all sorts of different things. FTSE directors are not the ones who need support getting into the workplace. She is talking about a menopause action plan, but we have had one, completed and delivered it, while Labour Members are just talking about bringing one in, which shows that they are not paying attention. We are the only ones who will be doing what is right to promote gender equality in the workplace."

Written questions to the Home Office

Lord Hay of Ballymore asked His Majesty's Government, "what measures they are implementing to reduce the risk of terrorist attacks in the UK?"

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Lord Sharpe of Epsom OBE responded:

"CONTEST is the UK's comprehensive counter terrorism strategy, and it's overarching aim is to reduce the risk to the UK and its citizens and interests overseas from terrorism, so that our people can go about their lives freely and with confidence. As announced in October 2022, CONTEST is being updated to protect the public from new and emerging threats and will be published later this year."

"Since CONTEST was last published in June 2018, we have delivered a number of measures to reduce the risk of terrorist attacks. We have established the Counter-Terrorism Operations Centre, pulling together expertise and resource across police, intelligence agencies and the criminal justice system in

order to better identify and tackle emerging threats. The Multi-Agency Centre works in partnership to better understand the national security risk posed by individuals who are or have been subject to national security investigations, bringing together existing expertise within the counter-terrorism community and working in partnership with experts in offender management, social care and safeguarding.

"The Home Office is in the process of setting up an assurance programme to oversee delivery of accepted recommendations from the Manchester Arena Inquiry. We are committed to implementing the recommendations of The Independent Review of Prevent swiftly, with the majority within one year of publication. This will pave the way for a more transparent, efficient, and sustainable Prevent programme."

"We have also strengthened our legislation; The Counter Terrorism and Border Security Act received Royal Assent in 2019 to ensure the police, Security Services, prosecutors, and the judiciary have the powers they need to tackle the evolving threat posed to the UK by terrorism. Martyn's Law, which is currently undergoing pre-legislative scrutiny, will keep people safe by introducing proportionate new security requirements for certain public venues to ensure preparedness for, and protection from, terrorist attacks. The Online Safety Bill, which will make tech companies will be accountable to an independent regulator to keep their users safe is currently progressing through the House of Lords."

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