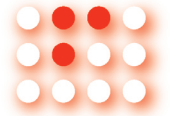
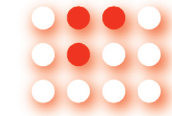


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Workers' rights under attack post-Brexit?

Government officials have raised the prospect that hard-won workers' rights could be reviewed by the Conservative government after Brexit in an attempt to boost Britain's economy.

A Whitehall impact assessment singles out workers' protections – such as preventing people from being forced to work too many hours – as an area that might be used for “maximising regulatory opportunities” after withdrawal.

MPs who have seen the document claimed it shows ministers are considering weakening employment rights post-Brexit – with one branding the paper an “absolute disgrace”.

Prime minister Theresa May has consistently said she will not weaken worker rights after the UK quits the EU, and has even vowed to strengthen them, but she has failed to commit to maintaining specific protections to do with working hours.

MPs told *The Independent* newspaper the document refers to a Department for Business, Environment and Industrial Strategy review of the potential impact of amending or removing existing employment regulations.

The government has faced intense questions over the Brexit assessment paper, which MPs can now view under strict conditions.

It has already been reported that the paper suggests the UK will be worse off after Brexit, even if the country secures free trade deals with the EU and other countries.

But MPs who have read it now claim that a part of the document in which officials explore areas for boosting the UK's economy also contains a lengthy section on “maximising regulatory opportunities”.

The section specifically mentions the EU's Working Time Directive as one of the regulations which could present an opportunity. The directive limits the hours someone can work in a week to 48 for most employees, makes annual leave compulsory and states that staff must be allowed at least 11 hours rest a day.

While prime minister Theresa May has committed to “maintaining and enhancing workers' rights” in general, she has refused to rule out the possibility that protections in the EU working time directive could be altered.

Other reports have suggested that Brexiteers Michael Gove, Boris Johnson and Liam Fox see changing the regulations as a way to boost economic growth.

LABOUR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

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Under the government's *EU (Withdrawal) Bill*, all European law, including those enshrining workers' rights, will be brought across on to the UK statute book on the day after Brexit.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady, commenting on a Brexit speech by foreign secretary Boris Johnson that argued for major regulatory divergence from the EU, said: "People have learned not to trust Boris Johnson. By calling agreements like the working time directive 'intolerable', he has fuelled fears that essential workplace rights will be lost after Brexit.

"When he says 'regulatory divergence' he means scrapping hard-won rights to paid holidays, equal pay and safety at work.

"We need a Brexit that protects jobs and guarantees workers' rights. All options must be kept on the negotiating table. But the best option we currently see to protect workers' needs is through the single market and customs union."

www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-worker-rights-impact-assessment-eu-withdrawal-leaked-theresa-may-a8201176.html

www.tuc.org.uk/news/workers%E2%80%99-rights-are-essential-not-%E2%80%99intolerable%E2%80%99-says-tuc

Good year for factory output in 2017

Last year, manufacturing put in its best year for three years, official figures show.

Factory output increased by 2.8% in 2017 compared with the previous year. That's the best performance since 2014 when the increase was 2.9%.

The annual increase in the production industries (mining and utilities as well as manufacturing) was 2.1%. This is the fourth consecutive annual rise and the strongest growth since 2010, when it rose by 3.2%.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said that in the final quarter of 2017 manufacturing output increased by 1.5% compared with the previous quarter and output was 3.4% higher than the same quarter 2016.

Metal goods and drugs were the driving force behind the increase with subsector increases of 5.7% and 4.1%.

The production industries saw output increase by

just 0.5% in the final quarter of 2017 compared with the previous quarter, but output was 2.3% higher than the same quarter 2016.

www.ons.gov.uk/economy/economicoutputandproductivity/output/bulletins/indexofproduction/december2017

Retail price inflation dips at start of 2018

Retail price inflation began 2018 at a lower rate than at the end of 2017.

In January, the Retail Prices Index (RPI) stood at 276.0 and the annual rate of inflation on the measure favoured by union negotiators was down to 4.0% against the 4.1% increase for December 2017. Cheaper food and motoring costs contributed to the slowdown.

In January, inflation under the Consumer Prices Index Housing (CPIH) – now the government's preferred measure – was unchanged at 2.7%. Meanwhile, inflation under the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) was unchanged at 3.0%.

	Price inflation			
	RPI ¹	% increase on a year earlier		
	RPI	RPIX ²	CPIH	
December 2016	267.1	2.5	2.7	1.8
January 2017	265.5	2.6	2.9	1.9
February	268.4	3.2	3.5	2.3
March	269.3	3.1	3.4	2.3
April	270.6	3.5	3.8	2.6
May	271.7	3.7	3.9	2.7
June	272.3	3.5	3.8	2.6
July	272.9	3.6	3.9	2.6
August	274.7	3.9	4.1	2.7
September	275.1	3.9	4.1	2.8
October	275.3	4.0	4.2	2.8
November	275.8	3.9	4.0	2.8
December	278.1	4.1	4.2	2.7
January 2018	276.0	4.0	4.0	2.7

¹ January 1987=100 ² RPI except mortgage interest payments

Eight of the 14 groups that make up the basket of goods used to calculate the RPI increased by more than 4.0% in January.

The 10.2% rise in the clothing and footwear group included a rises of 12.8% and 12.5% in women's

clothing and men's clothing respectively, with children's clothing up by 9.9%.

The overall increase fuel and light group was 6.5% and included a 10.5% rise in domestic oil and other fuels and an 11.4% increase in electricity prices.

The 5.7% increase in the fares and other travel costs group included a 6.8% increase in bus and coach fares, but only a 2.9% increase in rail fares.

The overall rise in the food group was 3.5%, but included substantial increases of 11.7% for coffee and other hot drinks, and a 4.5% rise in fresh milk. Bread prices were up by 5.9% and lamb by 9.9%.

Prices were down for eggs, lamb and soft drinks.

Dearer foreign holidays, with a 6.0% increase, contributed to the leisure services group's overall increase of 4.4%.

The housing group's overall increase at 2.7% was well below the overall rate, but included a 3.8% increase in council tax and rates.

More than 4.0%	%	Less than 4.0%	%
Clothing & footwear	10.2	Food	3.5
Tobacco	8.4	Catering	3.0
Fuel & light	6.5	Alcoholic drink	2.9
Fares etc	5.7	Housing	2.7
Motoring expenditure	4.7	Household services	2.4
Household goods	4.7	Personal goods & services	1.3
Leisure goods	4.5		
Leisure services	4.4		

www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/consumerpriceinflation/january2018

Vice-chancellors attend their pay committees

The vast majority of UK university heads can attend the committee that sets their pay, according to a new survey from the UCU university and college lecturers' union.

The vice-chancellor was either on the committee that sets their pay or allowed to attend its meetings at 95% of UK universities.

And in a complete lack of transparency, three-quarters of institutions will not release full minutes of the pay committee's meeting.

The findings are part of research looking into pay, perks and transparency at the top of universities by UCU covering the academic year 2016-17.

The union sent a Freedom of Information request to 158 institutions asking about membership of their remuneration committee – the body that sets vice-chancellor pay – and asked for a copy of the most recent committee minutes.

When asked about the vice-chancellor's membership of the remuneration committee, 15 universities refused to respond and one said they did not have a remuneration committee. Of those that did respond, and had a committee, almost half (47%) said the vice-chancellor was a member. Of the universities who said the vice-chancellor was not a member of the remuneration committee, just seven said they didn't attend its meetings.

Only a quarter of universities (25%) sent unredacted minutes of the latest remuneration committee meeting. Eighty-nine (55%) universities said they would share the minutes, but just 40 of them were prepared to do so without redacting them fully or in part.

Of the 61 universities that are soon to be hit with 14 days of strike action over pensions, just two have vice-chancellors who do not either sit on their remuneration committee or can attend its meetings.

UCU research has shown that university vice-chancellors have enjoyed huge pay rises in recent years. The average pay (excluding pensions) for vice-chancellors in 2005-06 was £165,105. Over the next decade it increased by 56.2% to £257,904 in 2015-16.

The union said there had to be radical change to how senior pay was set and governed in universities. The newly-formed Office for Students has promised to tackle the issue, but previous efforts to rein it in have failed. UCU said it wanted to see students and staff on the remuneration committee and the vice-chancellor removed and barred from attending with all minutes made public.

UCU general secretary Sally Hunt said: "It is quite staggering that just seven universities say their vice-chancellor was neither a member of the committee that sets their pay, nor allowed to attend the meetings. For too long universities have got away with painting remuneration committees as independent bodies to deflect attention over senior pay.

"The time has come for proper transparency of senior pay and perks in our universities and that

starts with full disclosure of the shadowy remuneration committee. It is scandalous that three-quarters of universities refuse to issue full minutes of these meetings.”

Pay boost UCU has also revealed that incoming principal at Edinburgh University, Professor Peter Mathieson, has been given a 33% salary hike as part of a welcome package worth £410,000.

Mathieson will be paid a basic salary of £342,000 – £85,000 more than predecessor Sir Timothy O’Shea. He will also receive £42,000 in lieu of pension contributions and relocation costs of £26,000, taking his package up to £410,000. He also gets to live in a five-bedroom grace-and-favour home in central Edinburgh.

Professor O’Shea’s total package last year was £321,000 according to the university’s accounts. That included a salary of £257,000, benefits of £28,000 and £36,000 towards pension and life cover.

www.ucu.org.uk/9326

www.ucu.org.uk/article/9308/Edinburgh-University-gives-new-principal-410000-deal-as-staff-prepare-for-USS-pension-strikes

Employers need to take neurodiversity on board

Seven out of 10 employers do not include neurodiversity – alternative ways of thinking such as autism, dyslexia and ADHD – in their people management practices.

A poll of more than 300 HR professionals by the CIPD HR professionals’ organisation found that neurodiversity was ignored in the policies of 72% of employers across the UK.

Around 17% said they did not know whether their organisation had a neurodiversity policy, while only

10.2% said they had one in place.

The CIPD claimed that, given that around 10% of the population is neurodivergent in some way, the majority of employers are missing out on the benefits associated with alternative ways of thinking.

It said neurodivergent people can have unique strengths including the ability to spot patterns and trends, sustain focus over long periods and process information quickly.

Dr Jill Miller, diversity and inclusion adviser at the CIPD, said employers were “screening out” neurodivergent people at a time when they needed to fill skills gaps.

“Rather than measuring potential employees against a long wish list of capabilities, we need to be clear on the key skills each job requires and enable people who possess those to play to their strengths,” she added.

The CIPD has created a guide with Uptimize – which provides training tools for neurodiverse individuals – to improve awareness and understanding of alternative ways of thinking in the workplace and the benefits of neurodiverse employees.

Its recommendations include:

- removing jargon from job descriptions and reviewing the use of competency-based recruitment frameworks;
- completing a desk assessment for new starters and avoiding bright lights in the office;
- encouraging regular one-to-one feedback sessions between neurodiverse employees and their managers;
- making sure neurodiversity is championed by senior personnel; and
- ensuring that support is available to all individuals and is clearly advertised.

www.personneltoday.com/hr/neurodiversity-ignored-seven-10-employers/

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