

## NEW DEPARTMENT SPEARHEADS DRIVE FOR BETTER REGULATION

A new department created by Prime Minister Gordon Brown is to spearhead the Government's drive for better regulation.

The move to set up Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERE) in Whitehall heralds a new age for regulatory services and signals the Government's determination to modernise the relationship between regulators and the regulated.

BERE will be the new home for the Better Regulation Executive, which leaves the Cabinet Office but retains its cross-Government responsibilities for the private, public and third sectors.

John Hutton is the first Secretary of State for Regulatory Reform, and Lord Drayson has taken on the role of Minister for Business and Regulatory Reform. Lord Drayson said: "The Prime Minister's announcement highlights the ongoing importance of the better regulation agenda, and his commitment to it.

"BERE will work across Government to make that agenda a reality – inspection and enforcement next to risk, compliant businesses advised and supported, rogue traders dealt with firmly and fairly.

"The contribution of the local government regulatory services community to better regulation is now more important than ever. These professionals are making the transition



John Hutton, above, and Lord Drayson, bottom left

from protecting consumers to playing an active part in delivering economic growth in the regions. This is vital if the UK is to continue being a place where businesses and entrepreneurs succeed and consumers and employees get a fair deal."

The creation of the new department has been welcomed by the Chair of the Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO), Clive Grace. LBRO will continue to play a major part in the drive for regulatory reform. He said: "It's a very exciting development and puts the better regulation agenda right at the heart of Government, with a strong voice at Cabinet meetings. The simple fact that regulatory reform is enshrined in the name of the new department will send a loud and clear signal of intent: better regulation is more important than ever. It's a move that LBRO wholeheartedly welcomes."

The new department will work to create an operating environment that enables businesses to succeed. Its wider responsibilities include productivity, business relations and consumers.

BERE will work with the newly formed Business Council for Britain, which draws together the talents of the top business leaders to help develop the national economy.



## WHAT ARE THEY SAYING ?

The creation of a new department to deal with regulatory reform has received a warm welcome from industry and the regulatory community. This is what key stakeholders have had to say:

"This is an imaginative re-shaping of the structure of government. The new brief of the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform will ensure that it is able to champion the competitiveness agenda in critical areas of policy including energy, employment and regulation." Richard Lambert of the CBI.

"The new Department is a signal of good intent from the Government. Hopefully this will build on the good work of the DTI and focus on fostering a spirit of enterprise and innovation in business. For UK plc to truly compete in the global economy it needs a strong voice in Whitehall and I hope the new Minister will prove to be a champion to business."

David Frost of the British Chambers of Commerce.

"Trading standards officers will welcome the fact that the red-tape beast scattered those parts of Whitehall that we dealt with to the four winds. We have invested a lot of time over the years in helping to develop Whitehall's understanding of trading standards, which is important because our remit is very broad. The fact that BERE is joining parts of the old DTI in the new department will create a natural synergy that benefits us all." Steve Greenfield of the Society of Chief Trading Standards Officers.

# FRONTLINE FACTFINDING

Companies and local regulatory services have been urged to open their doors to the Better Regulation Executive for a massive programme of visits aimed at identifying frontline pinchpoints.

Officials have pledged to undertake a series of visits to communities of all sizes and regulatory professionals listening to problems and hearing about successful initiatives.

Intelligence gained from the visits will help shape the Government's regulatory reform agenda.

Anne Duncan, CEO of Yellowfin Ltd, a marine dive development company said of their visit: "For small, innovative companies like ours, regulation is a key issue and I have been eager to champion this. We were delighted to have a visit from members of the Better Regulation Executive to talk through the issues related to our business."

The Executive are keen to hear from anyone who is facing a particular pressure point because of existing or impending legislation, or anyone who has a really successful initiative that they want to showcase. They also want to hear about experiences with regulators and enforcement agencies and suggestions for regulatory

improvement.

A Better Regulation Executive delegation met Cambridgeshire Trading Standards in June and visited a Portuguese food shop and Eastern European grocers in Wisbech to see how compliance with EU food labelling legislation has been improved.

By working with businesses local TS officers have developed a generic marketing toolkit for ethnic food shops.

Everybody's Access To International Groceries (BATING), which has not only increased compliance but also paid dividends with customers.

Tobin Stephenson, from Cambridgeshire Trading Standards, said: "We've taken the Hampton report to heart and are trying to embed its values in the work we do. So to have an opportunity to bring someone senior in from Whitehall to have a look round and give us some feedback was invaluable."

"You are always a bit nervous when you do something like this, but the visit was very positive from the start and even the traders we got involved were glad of the opportunity to speak to senior figures from Government."

Further information from Lucy Street on [lucystow@camptsg.gov.uk](mailto:lucystow@camptsg.gov.uk)

## BUYER CONFIDENCE COMPLIANCE SCHEME SECURES SUPPORT FROM HIGHLANDS TO THE SOUTH COAST

A pioneering scheme that sets trading standards officers vouching for compliant traders is being expanded.

The 'Buy With Confidence' initiative (BWC) was set up by Hampshire County Council in 1999 but has now been adopted by authorities as far afield as the Isle of Wight and Nottingham.

And Cornwallish non-EU food store, the Western Isles council, is one of several local authorities set on roll on the scheme in coming months.

BWC helps improve compliance by publishing a list of traders who meet their obligations under trading standards legislation – giving law-abiding firms a competitive advantage over their non-compliant rivals.

It also gives trading standards status an opportunity to build a positive relationship with companies so they can fulfil compliance in a friendly way and offer advice and support.

The initiative is run by a partnership of member authorities. According to Helen Woods from founding member Hampshire County Council, feedback from consumers and companies has been very positive.

"The companies that sign up for the scheme appreciate the advice and information being offered. Many of them will never have had contact with trading standards previously and this is an excellent way to show that we can be a big help in meeting their legal obligations," she said.

Consumers are able to log onto [www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk](http://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk) to see who they can trust, without having to decipher trade body schemes that may not offer credible guarantees. The website receives more than 630,000 hits a year.

Businesses paying from accountancy practices to yacht charter firms have signed up – around 1,900 in total. Small changes are needed to cover council expenses although these do vary between local authorities in different areas.

Further information from Helen Woods on 01962 333 692.

## TRADERS URGED TO 'READ ALL ABOUT IT'

Trading Standards teams in the Midlands have adopted an 'informal and informative' approach to raising compliance.

Fourteen authorities have joined together to publish Trading Standards News, a newsletter aimed at providing advice on legislation, highlighting scams and other matters close to companies' hearts.

The Central England Trading Standards Authorities (CENTSA) is behind the newsletter, which was started at the request of local businesses.

Helen Kirkman is a project consultant working with CENTSA on the newsletter. She said: "We asked traders how they wanted to receive information from us and the overwhelming response was via a newsletter. We've put eight editions together so far and the feedback has been really good."

"By pooling our resources and expertise we've been able to produce something of good quality that helps Midlands companies comply with their legal obligations and foster a productive relationship with our traders."

A separate annual edition of the newsletter is produced for companies new to trading standards and covers general concerns.

Three other issues are published each year and each follows a theme. Recent editions of the newsletter cover everything from the smoking ban to the law on 'use by' dates.

Circulation currently stands at more than 7,000 although many more readers are thought to be accessing it via the internet or email newsletters.

For more information about the newsletter contact Helen Kirkman on 01283 233311.

# ROLE REVERSAL GIVES BUSINESS INSIGHT

Business leaders will step into the shoes of trading standards officers in a pilot scheme to break down barriers between industry and frontline regulators.

The 'swap days' initiative has been launched by the Trading Standards Institute and the Greater Manchester Chamber and will also see regulators going behind the scenes at local companies.

It is hoped that first hand experience of the issues and needs facing both groups will help increase understanding and transparency, and foster a key relationship between industry and local government.

The Better Regulation Executive is backing the scheme. Chief Executive Jitinder Kohli said: "This is an excellent way of helping trading standards teams to understand what support and advice businesses need and for entrepreneurs to get a feel for the requirements of local regulatory services and the support they can provide, making an important relationship more transparent."

Paul Ramsden, Deputy Chief Executive of the Trading Standards Institute said: "Establishing these kind of relationships fosters a true understanding of the pressures on both regulators and business. It should help develop a productive partnership that is an efficient and effective means of ensuring compliance."

If the pilot proves successful, it could be rolled out to other regulatory services and to other parts of the country.

For further information contact Paul Ramsden on 0845 608 9405.



Jitinder Kohli

Jitinder Kohli applauded the "significant contribution" made by regulatory services teams to their local community and economy as he addressed delegates at the TSI consumer affairs conference in Manchester.

He said modern regulatory services had to see themselves as promoting economic development and prosperity, not just protecting consumers and the public. He described the efforts being made to implement the Hampton report as "excellent".

## ROGERS ROADSHOWS START

A series of seminars to help explore the implications of national enforcement priorities for local authorities is underway.

Although each of the events is different, they will all help frontline staff get to grips with the outcomes of Peter Rogers' report.

The first event was held in Manchester and featured talks from Suzanne Redding of the Better Regulation Executive and the Rogers Review secretariat, Steve Harrison, of Westminster Council's community protection department, and Derek Allen of the Local Authority Co-ordinators

of Regulatory Services (LACORS). Graham Russell of Seftonshire Council - the chief executive designate of the Local Better Regulation Office (LBRO) - also spoke. The speakers discussed how different local authorities will be implementing the Rogers priorities.

Central England Trading Standards Authorities (CE-TSAs) ran an event in Wolverhampton on the featured Peter Rogers discussing the impact of the review and raising questions. Future events are planned.

More information from Suzanne Redding on: [suzanne.redding@better.gov.uk](mailto:suzanne.redding@better.gov.uk)

## LAW GUIDE FOR UNI LANDLORDS

Landlords renting out student properties in Manchester are being given their own reading assignment this summer as the city council launches a major compliance drive.

The city welcomes around 35,000 students each year but the University of Manchester can only make 9,200 official places available – meaning lots of students must rely on private rented accommodation.

Manchester City Council has prepared a short guide to landlords' environmental health responsibilities and other legislation, such as planning laws on advertising boards.

The publication is tied to a series of advice hotlines that landlords can call if they want advice and information – shifting the burden away from enforcement to support and advice.

More information from Jenny Seckel: [j.seckel@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:j.seckel@manchester.gov.uk)

## MEET THE TEAM



Lord Drayson

A successful entrepreneur with a PhD in robotics, the new Minister for Business and Regulatory Reform, Lord Drayson, entered politics in 2001, taking a seat in the House of Lords. He has strong business credentials, having co-founded Proderject Pharmaceuticals, one of the world's top vaccines companies. His initial ministerial brief was defence procurement, and he still retains responsibilities in the Ministry of Defence. Having trained as an engineer, he has also raced a bio-fuelled Aston Martin in the British GT championship.

## FRONTLINE URGED TO 'NAME AND SHAME' THE WORST RED TAPE

Frontline workers have been urged to 'name and shame' bits of troublesome bureaucracy that impede their performance.

A new government strategy for cutting red tape in the public sector will allow those at the sharp end of regulation to say what irritates them the most and suggest potential reforms.

Cabinet Office Ministers Hilary Armstrong and Pat McFadden met frontline workers in June to launch the new strategy, which contracts government departments to:

- Getting Whitehall to fully identify the unnecessary burden on public services for the first time
- Publishing lists of the top 10 irritants for the different professions and plans for mending them.
- Reducing the amount of information Government asks frontline workers for.

Ministers recognise that while standards and targets have played an important part in improving public sector performance and will remain a fixture of government life, action is needed to address the amount of time consumed by back room schemes, such as form filling and filing data returns. The strategy looks to cut schemes made by departments. Communities and Local Government has pledged to cut the number of targets facing local authorities from 800 to 200 and Ofsted have cut the length and frequency of their inspections.

The strategy has been pulled together



William Sargent

by the Better Regulation Executive. William Sargent, Executive Chair said: "Nobody knows better what the reforms need to be than those on the frontline."

"This is a golden opportunity to name and shame those unnecessary, bureaucratic requirements that impose an unreasonable burden and which prevent frontline professionals from getting on with their jobs. The Government is deadly serious about freeing local regulators to get on with the job of making better regulation a reality."

Suggestions about how to cut red tape can be made through [www.betterregulation.gov.uk](http://www.betterregulation.gov.uk). All ideas will receive a response within 90 days and ones that are approved will form parts of government's simplification plans. These could be a reality by 2010.

Further information is available from [angela.cadden@betterpsi.gov.uk](mailto:angela.cadden@betterpsi.gov.uk)

## HAVE YOUR SAY ON CONSULTATION

The way Government consults businesses, voluntary groups, charities and the public is under review.

Ministers want to ensure that the right people are asked the right questions when important decisions are taken.

A consultation paper has been published examining the current approach and options for improvement. It covers issues such as who should be encouraged to have a say, how they should be asked and how long they are given to respond.

*Effective Consultation: asking the right people, asking the right questions, listening to the answers* also considers options for a pan-Government consultation policy.

It is available from [www.consultations.gov.uk](http://www.consultations.gov.uk). The deadline for responses is 28 September.

More information from Ian Ascough on [ian.ascough@betterpsi.gov.uk](mailto:ian.ascough@betterpsi.gov.uk)

## YOUR CHANCE TO SHOUT ABOUT IT

Are you doing something to improve compliance and cut bureaucracy that you want to share with the rest of the regulatory services community? Email your best practice case studies to [willy.armstrong@betterpsi.gov.uk](mailto:willy.armstrong@betterpsi.gov.uk). Please include your contact details.

## INFORMING THE PUBLIC IN A MULTI-MEDIA AGE

The Government is exploring how a wider range of communication channels can be used to ensure that citizens get the official information they need.

A new report from the Better Regulation Executive, *Regulating the Public in a Multi-Media Age*, suggests that local authorities alone could spend as much as £30million advertising important information via statutory notices each year.

Mandatory use of press adverts is written into more than 80 Acts of

Parliament, although a recent evidence suggests many authorities exceed the minimum requirements set out in laws covering everything from planning and licensing to environmental controls, financial matters and traffic regulation.

Minister Pat McFadden said that Government must keep pace with the changing multi-media environment. "The key question is how we get information to people in a manner which fits with how they live their lives today," he said.

The report explores press advertising,

websites, direct correspondence to residents and site notices.

Recent local authority research found enthusiasm from the public for raising awareness through a variety of different communication channels.

Government has called for responses to the report before pressing ahead with legislative reform.

Views can be submitted through <http://haveyoursay.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation>.

Further information from [clive.fleming@betterpsi.gov.uk](mailto:clive.fleming@betterpsi.gov.uk)