

International:

Political pressure is mounting to make businesses pay for the damage they cause to the environment, and the latest UN study assessing the impact of the world's biggest companies is almost certainly the first stage in a concerted campaign to calculate how much damage is caused, what it is worth and ultimately how it can be stopped.

Juliette Jowit, guardian.co.uk (19.2.10), *Time to clean up: UN study reveals environmental cost of world trade*, www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/feb/19/business-environmental-damage/print, Guardian News and Media Limited 2010.

European:

The European Commission's DG Enterprise has published a summary guide to the main funding opportunities available to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across the EU. The guide outlines the opportunities available through the EU's Structural Funds Programme and highlights other thematic funding opportunities linked to specific objectives such as the environment, research, education and culture.

SMEs can also benefit from non-financial assistance through networks and business support programmes which help SMEs access markets outside the EU. A range of financial support is also available to SMEs via the European Investment Fund, which aims to increase the volume of credit available to SMEs.

For more information on the funding options available, have a look at the guide at: www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=3537.

England's East Midlands European Office newsletter (February 2010), *New SME funding guide*, www.eastmidlandseurope.org.

National:

The UK economy grew by 0.3% in the final three months of last year, faster than previously estimated. The revision was due to stronger growth in services and production.

BBC News (26.2.10), *UK economic growth revised up to 0.3%*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/8538293.stm>, BBC @ MMX

Mitsubishi, one of the world's leading wind turbine manufacturers, has unveiled plans to spend £100m building a new factory in the north-east, creating hundreds of clean-tech jobs. A Spanish-owned group, FCC, said it planned to spend another £100m building wind turbines on some of the dozens of waste recycling plants it controlled in Britain through a local subsidiary.

Terry Macalister, guardian.co.uk (25.2.10), *Mitsubishi to build £100m UK wind turbine factory*, www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/feb/25/mitsubishi-wind-turbine-factory, Guardian News and Media Limited 2010.

The Prime Minister has announced that £200m from the UK Innovation Investment Fund (UKIIF) will be used to benefit life sciences, digital and advanced manufacturing businesses. This follows an announcement last month that £125m from the UKIIF will be invested in low carbon and clean tech sectors, bringing the total UKIIF investment to £325m.

Department of Business Innovation and Skills (22.2.10), *£200m Boost for Future Technology Sectors*, www.bis.gov.uk/tag/uk-future-technologies-fund, Crown Copyright.

The UK inflation rate rose to 3.5% in January - the fastest annual pace for 14 months - from 2.9% the month before, official figures have shown. Consumer Prices Index (CPI) inflation was driven up by VAT returning to 17.5% and higher petrol prices. Retail Prices Index (RPI) inflation, which includes housing costs, rose up to 3.7% in January, up from 2.4%.

BBC News - UK inflation accelerates to 3.5% in the UK (16.2.10), <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/8517156.stm>, BBC. Copyright MMX.

Barclays Bank has seen its full-year profits increase by 92% to £11.6bn (\$18.2bn) in 2009.

BBC News (16.2.10), *UK bank Barclays reports profits up 92% to £11.6bn*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/8517438.stm>, BBC. Copyright MMX.

Interest rates on credit cards are at their highest level for 12 years, according to research by Moneyfacts. The financial information service said that the average rate has risen steadily to 18.8% in February, despite the main Bank rate remaining at 0.5%.

BBC News (16.2.10), *Credit card interest rates 'at new high'*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/8517738.stm>, BBC.MMX.

National and regional 2009 quarter 4 statistics are available on insolvency proceedings issued in the county courts and High Court for both individuals (bankruptcy petitions) and businesses (company winding up petitions) in England and Wales. These figures represent court activity and not the actual numbers of individual or business insolvencies. The Insolvency Service publishes parallel quarterly statistics on this issue (see below).

Ministry of Justice (11.2.10), *Company winding up and bankruptcy petition statistics*, www.justice.gov.uk/latest-updates/companywindingupandbankruptcy.htm, Crown Copyright.

This bulletin contains statistics on gross value added, exports, employment and numbers of businesses within the creative industries.

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) (10.2.10), *Creative Industries Economic Estimates: February 2010*, www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/6622.aspx, Crown Copyright.

A study by the Local Data Company (LDC) shows retail vacancy rates across Britain rose 2% in the past six months of last year to 12%, with some towns seeing as much as 24% of its shops lying empty.

Nick Mathiason, guardian.co.uk (10.2.10), *Ghost town threat as UK shops fall empty*, www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/feb/10/uk-empty-shops-threat, Guardian News and Media Limited 2010.

The latest figures from the Insolvency Service show that the number of people entering into insolvency in England and Wales rose to a record total of 134,142 last year and experts say the figure is likely to rise further in 2010.

Datablog, guardian.co.uk (8.2.10), *Bankruptcies and insolvencies since 1960*, www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2009/nov/06/bankruptcy-iva-insolvency-debt-data, Guardian News and Media Limited 2010.

The Department for Communications and Local Government (CLG) has published a document for consultation on draft guidance for the economic prosperity boards and combined authorities called for by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. Deadline date: 29 April 2010.

Communities and Local Government (4.2.10), *Economic Prosperity Boards and Combined Authorities: Consultation on draft statutory guidance* (ISBN: 978-1-4098-2196-0), <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/citiesandregions/pdf/1457197.pdf>, Crown Copyright.

The Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP, Minister for Business, Innovations and Skills, gave a speech to the Deloitte Academy in London on 3 February 2010 encouraging businesses to consider the economic opportunities presented by an ageing population.

Department for Business, Innovations and Skills (BIS) (3.2.10), *Economic opportunities for an ageing population*, www.bis.gov.uk/economic-opportunities-for-an-ageing-population, Crown Copyright, 2009.

This is a transcript of the podcast by Prime Minister Gordon Brown on 30 January 2010. He talks about the British economy's return to growth.

www.number10.gov.uk (30.1.10), *Prime Minister's Podcast on the Economy*, www.number10.gov.uk/Page22317, 10 Downing Street, Crown Copyright.

Regional:

Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce have contributed to a study by the British Chambers of Commerce to identify the nation's most crucial transport projects over the life of the next Parliament. The widening of the A453 between Junction 24 of the M1 and the A52 in Nottingham is seen as the East Midlands' top transport priority because of its links to East Midlands Airport (one of the UK's largest air freight hubs), bringing estimated benefits of £320m to the region. It is among a list of 13 key transport projects which would deliver £85bn of benefits to the UK's economy. Further transport priorities across Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, as identified by local firms, will be unveiled in the release of a new Regional Transport Infrastructure Survey in March.

Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce (22.2.10), *A453 Is Region's Top Transport Priority*, www.dncc.co.uk/members/3644/a453-is-regions-top-transport-priority, 2010 Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce

East Midlands Development Agency (emda) has announced a new £20 million East Midlands Urban Development Fund (EMUDF) to support the development of premises focused on innovation and growth. The Fund has already secured £15 million; £5 million from emda and £15 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which emda manages on behalf of the region.

east midlands development agency (15.2.10), *£20m Urban Development Fund open for business*, www.emda.org.uk/projects/details.asp?filevar=530&Page=1&PageNo=, © 2010 East Midlands Development Agency.

A free online public procurement course, "Winning the Contract", has been launched to help smaller firms bid for the £220 billion of public sector contracts awarded each year. For more information and guidance, contact Business Link on 0845 058 6644; e-mail info@businesslinkem.co.uk; or visit www.businesslink.gov.uk/eastmidlands/procurement.

east midlands development agency (10.2.10), *Helping smaller firms win Government contracts*, www.emda.org.uk/news/newsreturn.asp?fileno=3877, © 2010 East Midlands Development Agency.

Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce have urged the Bank of England to beware of a "double-dip" recession following its decision to halt quantitative easing - the programme of putting new money into the UK's troubled economy. The Chamber has said to the Bank that it must remain ready to help expand the economy amid only lacklustre growth. The UK officially came out of recession at the end of December, but grew by only the narrowest margin of 0.1%.

thisisnottingham.co.uk, Evening Post (4.2.10), *Chamber's recession warning as rates held*, www.thisisnottingham.co.uk/news/Chamber-s-recession-warning-rates-held/article-1805239-detail/article.html, Nottingham Post Media Group Ltd.

Local:

Chris Brown, retiring Bank of England regional agent, confirmed to local businesses at the Bank's quarterly briefing meeting in Nottingham on 11 February that recovery will be slow and steady rather than a rapid rise. Mr Brown will be succeeded by Alistair Cunningham at the end of March.

thisisnottingham.co.uk, Evening Post (12.2.10), *Feel-good factor some way off, Bank tells East Mids firms*, www.thisisnottingham.co.uk/news/Feel-good-factor-way-Bank-tells-East-Mids-firms/article-1825029-detail/article.html, Nottingham Post Media Group Ltd.

New plans for a £5.2m Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre have been unveiled by Nottinghamshire County Council. The new design is made almost entirely from wood, representing a modern interpretation of a Saxon hut. The council hopes the new centre will attract 500,000 visitors per year spending an estimated £7.5m cash and creating more than 300 jobs.

thisisnottingham.co.uk, Evening Post (11.2.10), *Robin Hood's £5m home revealed*, www.thisisnottingham.co.uk/news/Robin-Hood-s-163-5m-home-revealed/article-1822425-detail/article.html, Nottingham Post Media Group Ltd.

Nottinghamshire is preparing to entertain five million extra visitors set to flock to the county on the back of Ridley Scott's Robin Hood film, which is released on May 14. Officials believe the number of tourists generated by it could be twice that brought in by the 1991 film Robin Hood Prince of Thieves. Tourists would bring a financial boost to businesses, hotels and restaurants. Packages are being put together which include accommodation and admission to attractions including Nottingham Castle and the Sherwood Forest Visitors Centre.

And a new Legend of Robin Hood attraction on the site of the former Tales of Robin Hood, in Maid Marian Way, could be a focal point. Planning Solutions Limited, which runs the successful Conkers forest attraction in Swadlincote, is in talks with the building's owners, Tesco.

The county council has approved a £50,000 promotional plan.

thisisnottingham.co.uk, Evening Post (4.2.10), *Tales of Robin Hood revamp?*, www.thisisnottingham.co.uk/news/Notts-gearing-Robin-Hood-visitor-influx/article-1801582-detail/article.html, Nottingham Post Media Group Ltd.

Dozens of jobs and millions of pounds could be generated as "green" firms and homes in Nottingham benefit from a new payment scheme. The Government announced yesterday that households and communities who install energy generating technologies – such as small wind turbines and solar panels – will be entitled to claim payments for the low-carbon electricity they produce from April.

thisisnottingham.co.uk, Evening Post (2.2.10), *'Green collar' jobs boost for Nottingham*, www.thisisnottingham.co.uk/news/Green-collar-jobs-boost-Nottingham/article-1785990-detail/article.html, Nottingham Post Media Group Ltd.

Developing a Diverse Social Care Market in Nottinghamshire – Opportunities for Local Businesses

The Government and local councils want to help people stay healthy and live independently for as long as possible. The 'Putting People First' initiative is about giving people more choice and control over how they get the support they need to do this. People will have a personalised budget to purchase tailor-made support to meet their own particular needs. The Government target is for good progress to be made across the country by 2011 but the change is already under way in Nottinghamshire.

'Putting People First' offers a range of opportunities for business. Last September, Nottinghamshire County Council held an event for providers in partnership with Economic Regeneration and the Voluntary sector. Aimed at voluntary groups, micro providers (defined as enterprises with 5 or fewer staff) and social enterprises of social care services, the conference "**Offering Real Choice: Developing a Diverse Social Care Market**" took a look at the opportunities and challenges presented by the introduction of Personal Budgets.

One of the key messages from the conference was for providers to start thinking about services they currently offer and how they are going to respond to Self Directed Support and Personal Budgets. Angela Catley from the National Association of Adult Placement Services (NAAPS) said: "This is a great personalised approach and one which is going to happen. It's important as providers to start thinking, listening and adapting to what service users want now".

During the event providers put forward their ideas on how providers can be supported to respond to the personalisation agenda. These ideas are being discussed by the working group (Nottinghamshire County Council, Economic Regeneration and the Voluntary sector) for future development.

Commissioning Officer from the Putting People First team Helen Turner said: "Nottinghamshire is a large county; we want to encourage and stimulate small local services such as micro providers and social enterprises to meet the needs of people in their local communities. We are aware of gaps in services in rural areas and some hard to reach groups. We are planning to work closely with NAAPS to develop the right approach to micro providers in Nottinghamshire, both existing and new".

For more information on the Putting People First and Self Directed Support please visit: www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/puttingpeoplefirst

Case study

Care and Comfort - a micro provider from Nottinghamshire

Whilst living in North Nottinghamshire Lis Lawrence realised there was a gap in adult services. With this in mind Lis carried out some market research and talked to local community groups to identify local needs. It soon became apparent that there was real need for services within this area and set up Care and Comfort as a registered charity in 2006.

Care and Comfort offer services to meet individuals' needs. Some of these include home support service, helping clients with shopping, cleaning, trips out, taking clients to the bank or doctors and installing Seniorlink (Community Alarms).

Lis Lawrence spoke at the Nottinghamshire's County Council Self Directed Support Providers event. Lis said: 'Personal Budgets will give people more choice and control over what care or activities suit their needs. At Care and Comfort we will be adapting our services based on individual needs and requirements. I see Self Directed Support providing real choice and sustainability for micro providers'.

For more information visit www.careandcomfort.org.uk