



Political Intelligence: September 2021

Fashion in Politics:

Real Fur Sales:

Christian Wakeford MP, secured a debate on the banning of real fur in the UK in parliament, on the 14th September, citing the growing move from both public and members of parliament away from real fur in the form of Free Britain's petition, Mr Wakeford's own cross-party letter to ban the import and sale, and an early-day motion from Tracey Crouch MP and Taiwa Owatemi MP. Hilary Benn MP, along with many others who agreed to the banning of fur sales, argued that if Britain banned fur farming it was illogical not to also ban fur imports and sales, with Mr Wakeford highlighting the hypocrisy of offshoring the cruelty. It was put forward that it should be a condition of government deal making that the UK will not make trade deals with countries that continue to exploit animals through the fur trade. The need for the issue surrounding real fur being sold as faux fur to be addressed was also highlighted.

The parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Rebecca Pow, took on board the comments of the debate, but highlighted that she was not in a position to announce any next steps as the 30,000 responses from the call for evidence on 31st May are still being studied and assessed.

Creative Workers in Europe

The topic of reduction of red tape and improved access for artists and musicians to work in Europe was posed in the House of Lords in early September by Baroness Kennedy of Cradley. Whilst the questions focused on musicians, Lord Strasburger pointed to the omission of the entire creative arts sector from the EU trade deal, "despite being the UK's largest sector after financial services". Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle also pushed on the topic of cabotage and whether there were any negotiations to fix the issues being faced. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Baroness Barran, noted that the government is working closely with the Department for Transport on the matter, with a recent call for evidence.

Environment Bill:

As the Environment Bill enters its final stages in the House of Lords, Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb pointed to WRAP data on the make-up of consumer packaging being 25% plastic,

and only 4% of that packaging is currently recycled, and noted WRAP's road map to change this, including tackling design, infrastructure, sorting and reprocessing technology.

The Lords has successfully voted in favour of amendments to: commit the government to a reduction in levels of fine particulate matter to within WHO guidelines by 2030, ensure the independence of the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), and remove exceptions for armed forces and defence policy and spending to have regard for the Environment Bill, among others.

Arts and Culture in Education, Work, and the Environment:

The importance of the Arts was raised across several debates in parliament throughout September, with Dan Jarvis MP highlighting the importance of the arts to the Levelling Up agenda, noting the economic benefits and improvement to life that arts and culture brings.

Baroness Bull noted the "critical role" that the arts and creative sector can play in education, as part of a debate around Net-zero Carbon Emissions: Behaviour Change. Tackling the definition of research and development from HMRC that excludes the arts and social sciences, Baroness Bull argued that: "this misses the important opportunity for scientific and technical advances to be informed by insights into human behaviour, social norms and culturally appropriate communication".

Coronavirus:

UK:

Nearly 45 million people, 66.9% of the UK population, have now been fully vaccinated (having received two doses), with the dose now being offered to all those 16 and over, plus those over 12 with underlying health conditions. Currently 6,556 people with coronavirus are in hospital in the UK, down by 245 from last week.

World:

Following a cross-party group of MPs calling for the Prime Minister to start immediately donating vaccine doses to poorer nations back in May and June, the government announced at the end of July the plan to donate 100 million vaccines bilaterally through COVAX over the next year, with the first batch of 9 million beginning delivery at the time of the announcement.

The APPG on Coronavirus, in September, argued for the government to share doses to low-income countries before booster jabs are started for healthy over-50s. However, the Health Secretary has stated that the government will follow the Joint Committee on Vaccination advice to move forward with the boosters.