

They work for you...

# PUBLIC SERVANTS



PUBLIC SERVANTS  
**WORKING FOR YOU**

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Prospect's  
vision for  
a modern  
public service

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# **Working for you**

## ***Prospect's vision for a modern public service***

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FOREWORD BY MIKE CLANCY

## **Britain faces challenging times...**

Whether it's negotiating and implementing Brexit, managing new environmental risks or navigating the technological revolution, we need world-class experts on our side.

Skilled and specialist public servants are vital to meeting these challenges and for our future security and prosperity. The quality and commitment of the people working in Britain's public services is one of our great national assets. But we face significant risks.

The public sector has lost half a million staff since 2010. A widening gap between public and private sector pay is making it harder to fill growing gaps in skills and expertise.

We also need to do more to develop the workforce, make the most of their insights and ideas, ensure all positions are truly open to talent, and protect the public service ethos.

Prospect supports and represents professionals, managers and specialists in the public and private sectors. They are highly qualified and skilled, in roles from animal health officers to air accident investigators; marine biologists to meteorologists; vehicle examiners to virologists.

Prospect is dedicated to supporting and championing the work they do to defend, protect and enhance the lives of UK citizens. We engage and work with the government wherever we can, but we also challenge them to change course or raise their game where necessary.

In that spirit we present our vision for public services that will meet the challenges of the 2020s and beyond, and our plan for building the workforce that can deliver it.

**Mike Clancy, Prospect General Secretary**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1) PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

- While the media images of civil servants are often stuck in the past, today's public servants work at the cutting edge of current global, social, environmental and technological developments.
- Prospect believes it is time to move beyond the short-term focus on cost-cutting that has dominated recent years, looking ahead to the new challenges our country faces, and ensuring we have the staff and the skills we need to deliver our security, prosperity and quality of life in the years ahead.

### 2) SECURING OUR FUTURE

- The UK faces big challenges and opportunities over the next decade and beyond – from navigating Brexit to managing new environmental risks and harnessing accelerating technological change.
- The expertise and commitment of our public servants will be critical on every front. Today, often with little public recognition, they are already working hard to secure our future.

### 3) THE COSTS OF AUSTERITY

- Prospect is incredibly proud of the work our members do every day to strengthen our country and improve its quality of life. But years of austerity have taken a toll.
- Key departments, agencies and public service providers have lost as many as one in four staff in under a decade; skills gaps have been made harder to fill by the fact that take home pay has fallen far behind comparable private sector roles.
- The strains on the system are beginning to show, in employees' workload and stress levels, and the quality and coverage of services delivered.

### 4) PREPARING FOR THE 2020S

- This is Prospect's six-point plan for building the workforce that will be needed to meet the challenges of the 2020s and beyond:
  1. A future-facing review of skills and staffing levels
  2. A pay strategy to retain talent and close skills gaps
  3. A plan to develop the workforce of the future
  4. An evidence-based approach to reorganisations and the role of the private sector
  5. A diverse, inclusive and representative workforce
  6. A new commitment to trade union and employee engagement

## 1) PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Prospect represents professionals, managers and specialists across the civil service and public sector – from policy delivery and programme management professionals to scientists and engineers, surveyors and inspectors, statisticians and data analysts, procurement and IT specialists. They work not only in Whitehall departments but in agencies, inspectorates, research establishments and frontline services around the country.

Their skills and specialisms are incredibly diverse. But all have devoted their working lives to protecting, defending and enhancing the life of the UK's citizens.

Things we take for granted every day depend on their diligence and expertise: from the quality of the air we breathe, the water we drink or wash in, the food we buy and eat; the safety of our transport and workplaces; the preservation of our natural environment and cultural heritage; the defence of our country from terrorist or military attack; the information on which government and businesses rely to plan and prepare for the future.

### *What does a civil servant look like?*

Today's civil service is a far cry from the popular image of bowler hatted mandarins in Whitehall:

- most work for agencies and other arms-length bodies rather than central government departments
- 8 out of 10 work outside London
- more than half are women (though only 40% of the senior civil service are)
- 11% are from ethnic minorities (though only 7% of the senior civil service are)
- there are more scientists, engineers, planners, statisticians, psychologists and vets than policy professionals<sup>1</sup>
- all are paid less than those with comparable skills and responsibilities in the private sector – and the gap is widening fast<sup>2</sup>

While the media images of civil servants are often stuck in the past, today's public servants work at the cutting edge of current global, social, environmental and technological developments. But they remain committed to and guided by an enduring public service ethos, and principles of public service such as those set out by the Nolan commission twenty years ago: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.<sup>3</sup>

*A fast changing world*

Public servants' work is constantly evolving, and in many areas is unrecognisable from even a few years ago.

- staff at the **Environment Agency** in York are transforming flood response capabilities by using the latest GIS (Geographic Information Systems) technology to turn local intelligence from field staff on the ground into real time data<sup>4</sup>
- the **Prison Service** chaplaincy has become an increasingly multi-faith activity as the need to provide services and support to a diverse prison population is recognised. Prospect has been fighting to ensure Muslim chaplains are not discriminated against on grounds of religion or race<sup>5</sup>
- the **Met Office** in Exeter is using artificial intelligence, machine learning and one of the world's most powerful supercomputers to lead the way on the management of "big data" – though "meteorologists' knowledge and experience are crucial" for producing sound forecasts<sup>6</sup>
- specialists at the **Ordnance Survey** in Southampton are using cutting edge aerial mapping technology developed by the **Defence Science and Technology Laboratory** to extract geographic content from satellite and aerial images

The civil service and wider public sector is changing fast. Data is being opened up to the public. New technologies are being harnessed. Workforce structures are becoming flatter, with staff more concentrated in middle and higher grades. Workplaces are being reconfigured, with increasing numbers of staff working in "hubs" alongside public servants from other departments and organisations, at the same time as some parts of the public sector are being given greater commercial autonomy or even privatised completely. All these changes need to be informed by coherent and long-term strategies, not driven by short-term cost-cutting.

*Enough of experts?*

- **85%** of people want politicians to consult professionals and experts when making difficult decisions
  - **83%** want government to make decisions based on objective evidence
- **Populus poll for Institute for Government, September 2016** (both percentages have risen since 2014)<sup>7</sup>

## *A new era*

After several years in which the civil service and public sector has been seen only in terms of costs to be cut – and its staff often denigrated and subjected to misleading attacks – there is now broad acknowledgement that it is time to recognise “the good that government can do”.

Public opinion – which never favoured deep cuts – has become more supportive of spending on public services in recent years, as well as more positive about the role of public sector organisations in providing services.<sup>8</sup> A majority are opposed to the current cap on public sector pay.<sup>9</sup>

One private sector consultancy has suggested we are at a turning point, where we move “from an era of challenge around one objective – eliminating the budget deficit – into an era of multiple and complex challenges” that will “see additional demands on the public sector” over the years ahead.<sup>10</sup>

Prospect believes this means moving beyond the short-term focus on cost-cutting that has dominated recent years, looking ahead to the new challenges our country faces, and ensuring we have the staff and the skills we need to deliver our security, prosperity and quality of life in the years ahead.

<p><i>Scientists and engineers</i></p> <p>The civil service includes over 10,000 scientists and engineers, who in the Government’s own words:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>“provide the core underpinning national science capability on which others, including academia, rely”;</i></li><li>• <i>“respond rapidly in emergencies to protect public safety”;</i></li><li>• <i>“provide technical support to assist policing and prevent crime”;</i></li><li>• <i>“use science and technology to help solve defence and security issues”;</i></li><li>• <i>“encourage innovation, and carry out cutting edge research.”<sup>11</sup></i></li></ul> <p>Prospect works closely with the Government Office for Science to ensure these capabilities are recognised and developed.</p>	<p><i>Management matters</i></p> <p>Discussions of civil service “leadership” tend to focus on the most senior civil servants working alongside Cabinet ministers.</p> <p>But ministers and senior civil servants depend on managers and team leaders to ensure advice is accurate and timely, and that policies are implemented efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>In the private sector it is increasingly understood that so-called “middle managers” are critical to organisational performance – because of their role in project management, resource allocation, and deadline supervision, as well as their ability to foster innovative and creative environments.<sup>12</sup></p> <p>This is particularly true in “knowledge-intensive” sectors – a description which increasingly characterises Government itself.<sup>13</sup></p>
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## **2) SECURING OUR FUTURE**

The UK faces big challenges and opportunities over the next decade and beyond, including:

- navigating Brexit
- harnessing technological innovation
- keeping Britain strong and secure
- meeting the challenge of climate change
- a stronger society
- infrastructure and industrial strategy
- securing our energy supply
- keeping us safe and healthy
- devolving and decentralising power
- protecting our environment
- driving the data revolution
- preserving and promoting our history

The expertise and commitment of our public servants will be critical on every front. Today, often with little public recognition, they are already working hard to secure our future. Here we highlight just some examples.

### *Navigating Brexit*

Implementing the UK's decision to leave the European Union has been described as the biggest challenge to government capabilities since the second world war – entailing not only the negotiation of a new relationship with Europe, but also to reshaping large areas of policy that the UK will now be responsible for.

- scientific and industry experts at key agencies and regulators such as the **Vehicle Certification Agency, Food Standards Agency** and **Food Standards Scotland**, and **Ofcom** are assessing the implication for their work and the sectors they deal with of a new relationship with European regulatory regimes
- agriculture, food and environmental experts at the **Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs** and its agencies are preparing to deliver a reformed system of support for farming, fishing and the environment to replace the Common Agricultural Policy, Common Fisheries Policy and hundreds of environmental directives
- diplomats, country experts and support staff at the **Foreign and Commonwealth Office** and new **Department for International Trade** are working to ensure Britain can maintain and strengthen influence and economic partnerships around the globe

*"Everything from EU science research funding, to aviation policy, to fisheries policy – and almost everything that DEFRA does - will need to be looked at and new systems and business operations put in place to fill the gap left by the EU".*

**- Amyas Morse, head of the National Audit Office, July 2016<sup>14</sup>**

*"the UK's world-leading scientific research laboratories have made vital contributions to the development of public and animal health management capacities in several member states... EU institutions need UK expertise on health security matters. This knowledge and expertise (or soft power) is likely to help the UK's position in the negotiation processes."*

**- John Connolly, University of the West of Scotland, July 2017<sup>15</sup>**

*"An active and influential British foreign policy outside the EU will require more investment... We will need to bolster our presence around the world. We may need to spend more on defence to support our military influence."*

**- Sir Simon Fraser GCMG, Former Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, November 2016<sup>16</sup>**

### *Keeping Britain strong and secure*

At the same time as terrorism and cyber-attacks pose new threats, political uncertainty and instability is raising new questions about alliances and assumptions that have governed foreign and defence policy for decades. Maintaining our scientific and technological edge is increasingly critical to our influence abroad, and security at home.

- engineers, technicians, analysts and other civil staff at the **Ministry of Defence** and agencies such as **Defence Equipment and Support** and the **Defence Science Technology Laboratory** are ensuring our armed forces have the advantage they need, from data analytics and remote-systems engineering to naval and aerial rapid response capabilities
- forensic scientists and other civilian specialists at the **Metropolitan Police** are enabling it to understand and respond to ever-changing threats of terrorism as well as organised crime, burglary and robbery, and domestic abuse

*"Defence technology could kick-start the economy in regions that have suffered most from deindustrialisation ... But defence is not just a good use of Keynesian economics. It would help Britain secure a diplomatic outcome to some of our current challenges."*

**- Tom Tugendhat MP, (now Chair of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee), December 2016<sup>17</sup>**

*"the principal defence effort going forward will be the process of incorporating the latest technologies into operational platforms quickly and effectively... These will need coupling to engineering competencies and support services to complement the capabilities of the armed forces."*

**- John Louth, Royal United Services Institute, June 2017<sup>18</sup>**

### *Harnessing technological innovation*

New technologies are transforming our economy and our way of life at an accelerating speed. Skilled public servants are playing a key role in stimulating and supporting innovation, as well as managing the risks and disruptions of rapid change.

- scientists and specialist staff working in **research councils, government laboratories** and **public sector research establishments** are playing an essential role in establishing Britain's leading positions in areas like robotics, advanced materials, energy storage, synthetic biology, satellites, fintech and agri-science
- Staff at the **UK Atomic Energy Authority's** state of the art robotics technology centre at Culham Science Centre are developing a world-leading test site for driverless cars,<sup>19</sup> while the atomic clocks built by scientists at the **National Physical Laboratory** in Teddington are being used to develop "blockchain" financial technology<sup>20</sup>
- experts, inspectors and enforcement officers at **regulatory agencies and inspectorates** ensure that new technology can be introduced safely and sustainably – for example, the work being done at the Health and Safety Executive to facilitate the safe introduction of hydrogen-powered vehicles<sup>21</sup>

- A recent evaluation of research in Europe reported that science and innovation accounts for **two-thirds** of economic growth in industrialised countries – as well as being key to "tackling the societal challenges of our time", from environmental sustainability to fairness and quality of life.<sup>22</sup>
- **91 per cent** of civil servants say they are "*keen to embrace technology and maximise any benefits*" – the highest proportion of any sector surveyed in a recent Smith Institute report.<sup>23</sup>

### *Infrastructure and industrial strategy*

Britain's future prosperity depends upon raising the productivity and competitiveness of our economy. UK productivity is stagnating, while its infrastructure currently ranks 24<sup>th</sup> in the world.<sup>24</sup> Public servants are playing their part in creating the conditions for British businesses and workers to succeed.

- planners, engineers and inspectors at the **Department for Transport** and its arms-length bodies are working every day to improve the safety, efficiency and quality of our roads, railways and other essential transport networks, while bodies from the **Planning Inspectorate** to **Natural England** and **Scottish Natural Heritage** ensure new construction and developments are fit-for-purpose and sustainable
- staff at the **Intellectual Property Office** in Newport deal with more than 20,000 patent applications every year. A "toolkit" created to facilitate university and business collaboration which has enabled numerous successful tech transfer projects and is itself being exported across the world
- high quality public sector institutions can play a key role in creating industrial "clusters" – from the centre for high-performance computing at **Daresbury Laboratory** in Cheshire to the role played by the **British Library** in turning Kings Cross into a Knowledge Quarter that is now home to organisations such as Google, the Francis Crick Institute, and the *Guardian*

*"Increased investment is welcome and presents us with some demanding challenges. Delivering such large-scale improvements to the highest standard, and offering the best possible value for taxpayers' money, requires a significant increase in [our] technical and commercial capacity"*

**- Colin Matthews CBE, Chair of Highways England, July 2016**

*"In South Korea, China, Finland, Israel and the US, for example, the state has played an active role in increasing innovation and the productive capacity of the economy... Today the argument should not be about whether the state should or should not be involved in driving growth but how it can do this in the best way."*

**- Professor Mariana Mazzucato, University College London, August 2016<sup>25</sup>**

### *Devolving and decentralising power*

Constitutional change and an increasing desire for regional development and community empowerment are changing the way decisions are made and services delivered. But the skills and expertise of public servants remain key.

- staff working for the **Scottish Government** and **Welsh Government** ensure the effective implementation of policies and delivery of services across all areas covered by the evolving devolution settlement
- civil servants in the **Department for Education**, **Department for Business** and **Department for Communities and Local Government** have been working with local authorities and city regions to devolve control over key areas of economic and industrial strategy
- the **Big Lottery Fund's** "Big Local" is an ambitious and pioneering experiment in new approaches to place-based funding has given 150 communities across the country a chance to work together on developing and implementing their own plan to improve their areas<sup>26</sup>

### *Protecting our environment*

Already loss of soil quality, pollinator declines, and the health costs of pollution are impacting our economy and quality of life. Improved monitoring, forecasting and mitigation of these risks has become a necessity.

- staff at the **Vehicle Certification Agency** were at the forefront of Britain's investigation into vehicle emissions testing, following the VW scandal in Germany, comparing lab tests with on-road emission levels
- staff at the **Office for National Statistics** in Newport and Hampshire are developing new ways of measuring the state of the UK's "natural capital" assets such as woodland, freshwater or coastal margins so that we can better protect and preserve these vital habitats and ecosystems
- public research organisations conduct vital research into environmental risks and challenges – from the leading role of the **Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science** in informing the management of marine ecosystems around the world, to the ground-breaking research on the link between pesticides and the bee population recently published by the **Centre for Ecology and Hydrology**<sup>27</sup>

The economic costs of environmental damage are mounting:

- mismanagement of river catchments is a major contributing factor to flooding which is estimated to have cost the UK at least **£5 billion** last winter alone
- the economic value of the effect of small particulate (PM2.5) pollution on mortality in the UK was around **£16 billion** in 2008 alone, equivalent to 29,000 premature deaths
- **£1.4 billion** additional annual UK revenues could be expected if UK fish stocks recovered to the average levels seen before the 1970s.<sup>28</sup>

### *A stronger society*

In every community and at any point in an individual's life, professional public servants have a vital role to play as enablers, empowering people to take control over their own lives and improve those of others

- professionals working in **education and children's services** are on the frontline of tackling inequalities and expanding opportunities for the next generation, from pioneering innovative early years provision to providing critical advice and support for 14-19 year olds
- the prison population has been rising sharply for many years. Specialist and support staff working for **Her Majesty's Prison Service** in England and Wales and the **Scottish Prison Service** are working to maintain the security and safety of public prisons while supporting rehabilitation to reduce reoffending.
- staff at the **Big Lottery Fund** ensure funds raised for good causes by the National Lottery Fund is well spent on health, education, environmental and charitable projects, ranging from early years intervention to commemorative travel funding for World War Two veterans

A recent study of the **impact of investment in public services** in European countries from 1995 to 2013 confirmed clear correlations between levels of spending and key social outcomes including **public health**, the proportion of **young people in education or employment**, and **crime rates** including property crime and violent crime.<sup>29</sup>

### *Keeping us safe and healthy*

Medical advances are improving treatments and extending life expectancy, but changes to our environment and the ways we live and work can create new risks and challenges.

- the BBRSC's **National Virology Centre** in Woking holds some of the world's most contagious livestock viruses, allowing research into diseases such as avian flu, African swine fever and foot-and-mouth
- staff at the **Food Standards Agency** have used data on tweets relating to symptoms of Norovirus to predict the number of cases, and is doing so with 70-80 per cent accuracy<sup>30</sup>
- inspectors and other staff at the **Health and Safety Executive** in Liverpool are working with businesses and employees to combat the rising incidence of musculoskeletal disorders, stress, and other work-related ill health that currently results in the loss of almost 26 million working days a year

*"In the context of national emergencies, be it an Ebola epidemic or an earthquake or flooding, science is absolutely at the top table in government in terms of the response."*

**- Sir Mark Walport, Head of the Government Science and Engineering Profession<sup>31</sup>**

#### *Meeting the challenge of climate change*

Already one in six properties in England is now at risk of flooding, and extreme weather is expected to become more frequent.

- staff at the **Met Office** in Exeter, **Environment Agency** in Bristol and **National Environment Research Council** are working together to model weather scenarios and flood risks to inform prevention and mitigation measures
- the **Met Office's** globally respected long term science programme helps maintain the UK's position at the centre of the scientific underpinning of international climate negotiations
- staff at the **National Environment Research Council** are monitoring the recovery of the ozone layer, after discoveries of the "hole" by public sector scientists resulted in international agreements on CFC chemicals thought to have slowed climate change by 5-6 times more than the Kyoto protocol

*"The impacts of climate change are becoming ever clearer, both in the United Kingdom and around the world. We must take action now to prepare for the further, inevitable changes we can expect... Delaying or failing to take appropriate steps will increase the costs and risks for all UK nations arising from the changing climate"*

**- Independent Committee on Climate Change, 2016**

#### *Preserving and promoting our history*

- staff working for organisations such as **Historic England, Wales Heritage** and **Historic Scotland** that protect and create access to our cultural, historic and natural heritage assets that support tourism estimated to add around £20bn to the economy every year
- staff at the UK's **national and major regional museums** have boosted visitor numbers to more than 70 million a year, and are embracing digital and

technological innovations to allow people to enjoy or contribute to their collections virtually

- staff at the **National Archives** in Kew are using the latest digital technology to open up historic documents and data to professional researchers and the general public – winning awards for a recent web-based resource on “Magna Carta and the Emergence of Parliament”

#### *Valuing our heritage*

- **73%** of UK adults agree that the UK government has a moral obligation to protect our heritage<sup>32</sup>

#### *Securing our energy supply*

Energy capacity margins are already being squeezed, and there are expectations of a 60 per cent increase in electricity demand by 2050. Keeping the lights on while meeting international agreements aimed at limiting global temperature rises will require a transformation in how we produce and consume energy.

- data generated and maintained by specialist staff at the **British Geological Survey** in Nottingham currently supports around £15bn a year of UK oil and gas activity, and is now being used to help us understand shale gas resources and the potential for storing carbon emissions underground
- scientists and technicians at the **Diamond Light Source** synchrotron built by the **Science and Technology Facilities Council** in Oxfordshire enabled EDF energy to research the performance of materials used to extend the working life of two nuclear power stations
- scientists at the **Culham Centre for Fusion Energy** in Oxfordshire are exploring how to turn the same process that makes the sun give off light into a potentially limitless source of power with far less nuclear waste than current fission reactors

*"By harnessing the opportunities presented by the current energy transition, it would be possible to create the right environment for the UK to be the global leader in the green technology sector... Technological leadership can be lucrative, but often occurs on longer timescales than private investment is comfortable with so there is a role for government in driving energy innovation."*

**- House of Commons Committee on Energy and Climate Change, October 2016<sup>33</sup>**

### *Driving the data revolution*

In the age of “big data”, the work of statisticians, surveyors, analysts and others in key public agencies has become central not only to government decision-making and service delivery but also to the latest scientific, business and consumer innovations.

- datasets maintained and made usable by staff at the **Ordnance Survey** and **Met Office** are fundamental to rapid improvements of understanding and techniques now underway in areas like agriculture and the environment
- surveyors and other specialists at the **Valuation Office Agency** provide essential property-related data and analysis that underpins tax and benefit systems as well as commercial property analysts
- the free “mySoil”, developed by the **British Geological Survey** in Nottingham, the **Centre for Ecology and Hydrology** in Oxfordshire and the **Met Office** in Exeter, is a tool for gardeners as well as a way for them to contribute their own observations to national datasets

*"What steam was to the nineteenth century, and oil has been to the twentieth, data is to the twenty-first..."*

*"As a nation we need high quality information to help government, businesses, families and individuals make the right decisions. In an era of new types of data, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the wider Government Statistical Service must be given adequate resources to develop new ways of making data easily accessible to business and policymakers, educational institutions and civil society."*

**- Royal Statistical Society, 2014<sup>34</sup>**

### 3) THE COSTS OF AUSTERITY

“The civil service is under pressure.... It has lost one in four civil servants since 2006 – with no reduction in workload, there’s a growing number of major projects to implement, greater public demand for services, new technologies – bringing both opportunities and threats, new ways of delivering public services, and action needed to leave the European Union.”

- **National Audit Office, July 2017**<sup>35</sup>

Prospect is incredibly proud of the work our members do every day to strengthen our country and improve its quality of life. But years of austerity have taken a toll:

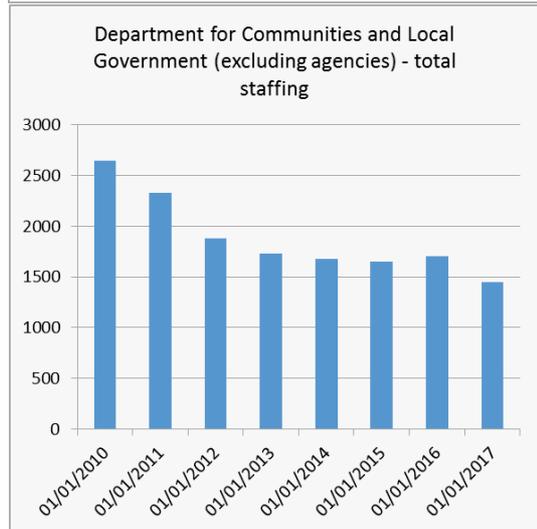
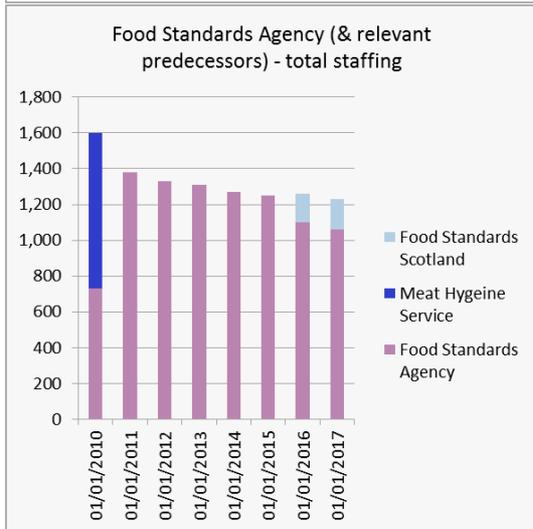
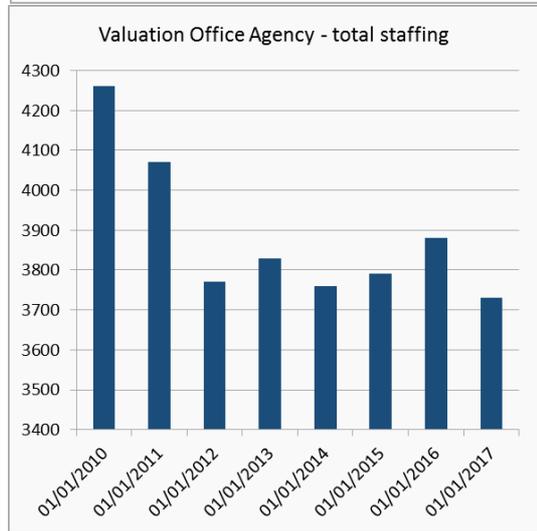
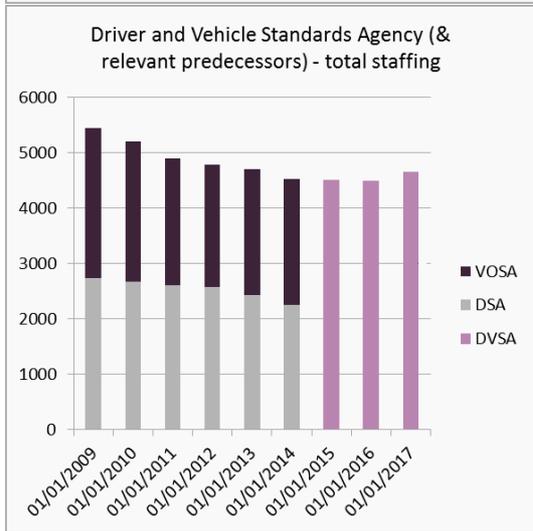
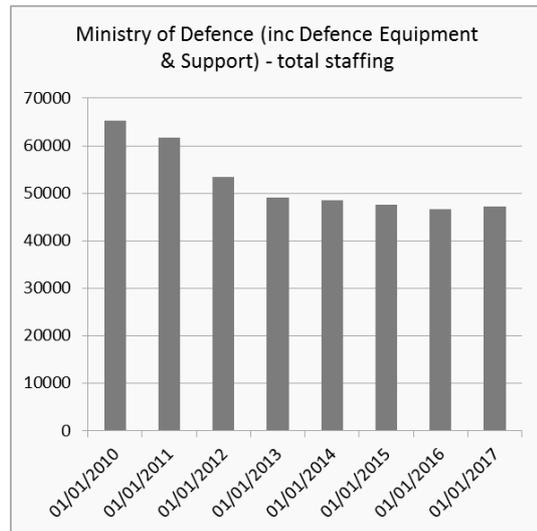
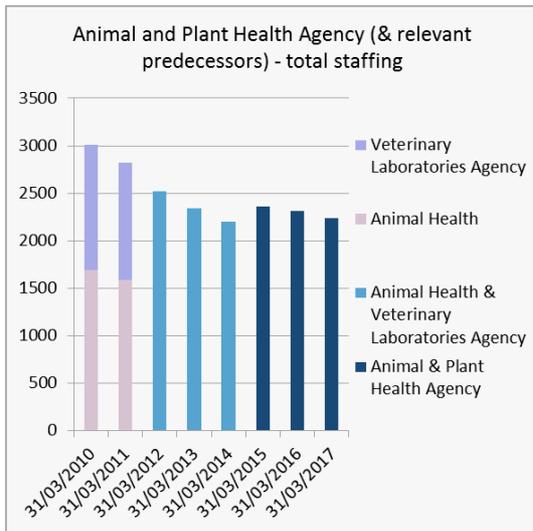
- Key departments, agencies and public service providers have lost as many as one in four staff in under a decade
- Skills gaps have been made harder to fill by the fact that take home pay has fallen by as much as a fifth in real terms, falling far behind comparable private sector roles, while training budgets have been cut.
- Short-term fixes such as reliance on consultants and temporary workers, or cost-driven restructuring and privatisation have further weakened capacity for the long-term.
- And the strains on the system are beginning to show, in employees’ workload and stress levels, and the quality and coverage of services delivered.

In 2017 a Parliamentary inquiry into the work of the civil service and the additional demands of Brexit found that while “many Civil Servants report their sense of public service is at its highest, their morale is not”.<sup>36</sup>

#### *Feeling the strain*

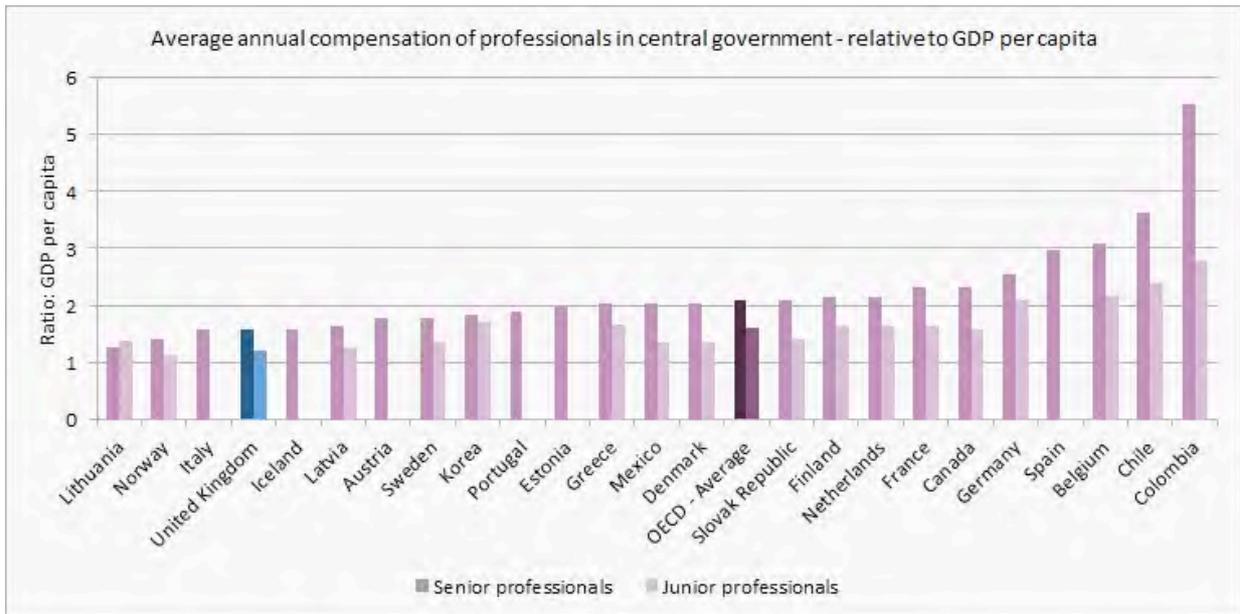
- 42% of civil servants say they **don’t have an acceptable workload** (a rise of 4% in six years)
- 73% of civil servants **don’t think their pay is “reasonable”** compared to people doing a similar job in other organisations has fallen (a rise of 6% over seven years)
- 23% of civil servants who **want to leave** their job as soon as possible, or within the next 12 months (a rise of 6% over seven years)<sup>37</sup>

Key departments and agencies have lost as many as one in four staff in less than a decade:



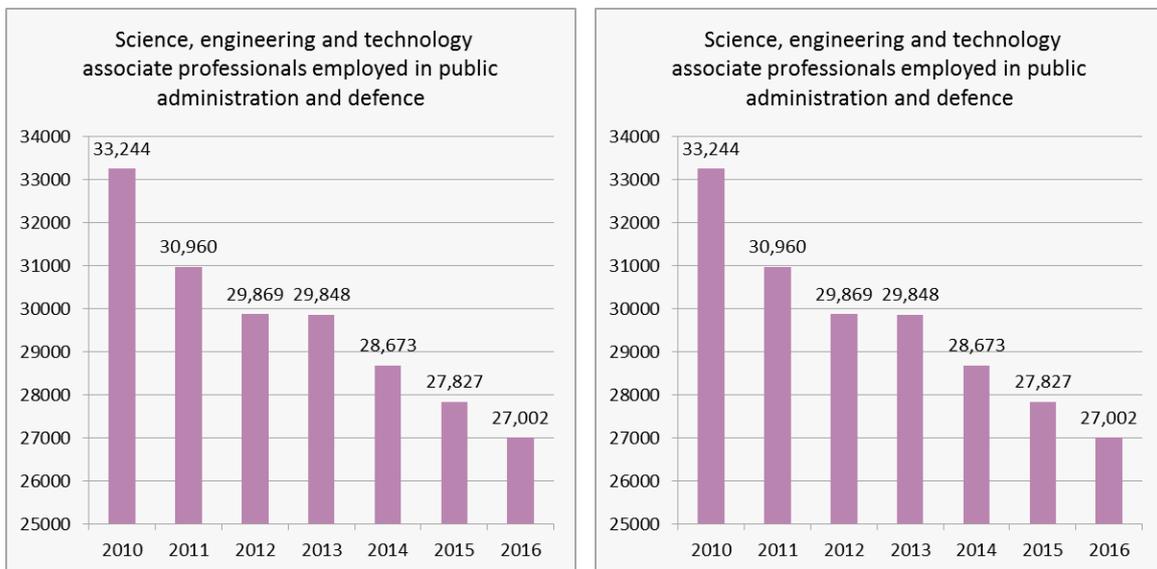
Source: ONS<sup>38</sup>

Figures show that relative to GDP per capita, pay for professionals working in the UK civil service is among the lowest in the OECD:



Source: OECD<sup>39</sup>

Although the Government's "Science and Engineering" profession is growing, reflecting increased awareness and more consistent reporting, independent statistics suggest that the civil service has lost more than 10,000 science, engineering and technology professionals since 2010:



Source: UK Commission for Employment and Skills<sup>40</sup>

An independent study conducted in 2017 by labour market and pay specialists found that five of six public sector employers it spoke to (who participated on condition of anonymity) were experiencing problems with recruitment, and most felt pay was a significant factor. A wide spread of specialist roles were identified as presenting problems, including, medical staff, quantity surveyors, scientists and training specialists as well as digital and commercial specialists.

The study concluded that “Government spending reductions are the main factor behind organisations’ difficulties in attracting staff. The cap on pay rises, with the outcome that public sector pay levels in many roles compare unfavourably with the salaries on offer for those positions in the private sector, is perhaps the central issue.”

#### *The pay cap that doesn't fit*

- The **business department** has reported that: “A number of BIS’s Partner Organisations have cited the two-year pay freeze and subsequent 1 per cent pay cap as causing problems to business delivery, particularly in specialist areas, such as science, engineering and IT. A consequence of this has been a reliance on interims.”<sup>41</sup>
- The **UK Atomic Energy Authority** has warned that “attracting and maintaining specialist skills in the organisation continues to be a significant challenge. Challenges in competing with market pay rates due to government pay constraints ... is impacting UKAEA’s ability to attract and retain key specialist skills. These external factors affect UKAEA’s ability to deliver its goals”<sup>42</sup>
- The **Science and Technology Facilities Council** reports that: “We continue to lose staff in Science Engineering and Technology (SET) roles due to lack of competitiveness on pay.”<sup>43</sup>
- **Ofwat** has reported that “the skills and experience we need are specialist and highly sought after by a wide range of employers, and the risk posed by continuing civil service pay constraints on our ability to retain and secure these skills is increasing.”<sup>44</sup>
- The **Met Office** has warned of “significant issues with retention and recruitment, in particular of scarce, skilled technology resources.”<sup>45</sup>
- The **Office of Rail and Road** has reported that “we require high-calibre staff, in many cases with scarce specialist skills, in order to carry out our functions effectively, and fulfil our strategic objectives. There is a risk that any difficulty retaining and recruiting the staff resources we need may impact on our ability to carry out our responsibilities in the most effective and efficient way... there are limits to how far this risk can be mitigated within the current parameters of public sector pay policy.”<sup>46</sup>

The OECD recently warned that “cost-cutting measures that were implemented in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis” may have had negative impacts on “workforce performance, motivation and longer term work capacities”. In particular, the OECD argues that drives to “downsize” Government organisations can be counterproductive and damaging to public objectives:

“most empirical findings suggest that the majority of restructuring and downsizing efforts fall short of objectives and that implementation places heavy administrative burdens on organisations and managers. Overall, work demands increase significantly for middle managers during and after downsizing, and the downsizing tends to take priority over most other management challenges, such as innovation and other business improvements. Other organisational challenges may include a loss of capacity and corporate knowledge, which leaves with the employees”.

In addition, “hiring freezes ... lead to an ageing of the workforce and reduces the diversity of ideas brought into the organisation”, while “salary reforms, if not carefully designed, limit the attractiveness of the few positions that are left open to recruitment, making it difficult to fulfil mission-critical occupations”. And “cuts to training appear contradictory in times when employers and employees are calling for the need to invest in skill and competency development as part of national competition strategies”.

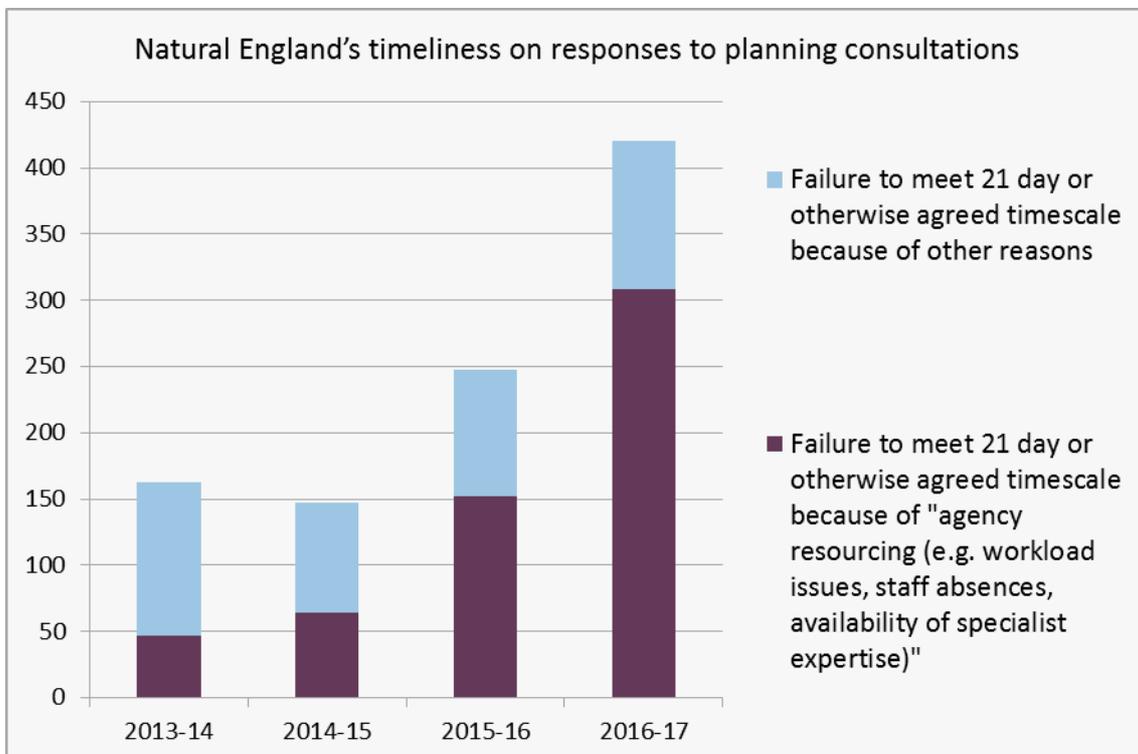
In sum, the OECD concludes, “these measures may paralyse public organisations’ abilities to evolve in the ways required of today’s fast pace of change”.<sup>47</sup>

In the UK there is now mounting evidence that important policies and public goals are being jeopardised as a result of the pressure on staffing and services. For example:

- the Institute of Government has warned that adding **Brexit negotiations and preparations** to the workload of the civil service after years of cuts to funding and staffing risks “overload”
- a leading public sector commentator recently warned that the Government “will need civil servants to carry out an **effective industrial strategy**, but we already know there’s an acute shortage of project management, financial and infrastructure skills within Whitehall.”<sup>48</sup>
- the Institute for Government have reported concerns that the aim of supporting **regional economic development** by devolving power to city regions outside London is being held back by lack of capacity in central Government departments<sup>49</sup>
- food policy experts have warned that cuts to the budgets and staffing at the Food Standards Agency and DEFRA mean that the UK’s **food safety and security** could be vulnerable as we withdraw from EU funding and regulatory frameworks<sup>50</sup>
- the Royal Statistical Society has said that the **availability and reliability of public data** is at risk because “Government statisticians are currently stretched in trying to deliver their core products, and the retention and improvement of statistical series needs more support”<sup>51</sup>

- the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator has said that the ability of the Ministry of Defence to “sustain a sufficient number of nuclear suitably qualified and experienced personnel” is the “principal threat to the delivery of **nuclear safety**”<sup>52</sup>
- conservationists have raised fears that cuts to the capacity of Natural England have reduced its capacity to do its vital job of **protecting our wildlife and natural environment**<sup>53</sup>
- an official review of the UK’s **defence science and technology capability** warned that “difficult choices” were being made such as “reductions in staff working in ... areas that are already at the minimum to support MOD as an expert customer, for example in weapons.”<sup>54</sup>
- media investigations have uncovered concerns over the capacity of the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency to **uphold road safety** because of staff and skill shortages limiting their ability to catch rogue hauliers<sup>55</sup>
- an investigation into increasing incidents of **farm pollution** has suggested that the “overstretched and under-resourced” Environment Agency needs more staff to tackle the problem<sup>56</sup>

*Performance data shows that resourcing and staffing issues at Natural England are holding up increasing numbers of planning consultations:*



*Source: Natural England<sup>57</sup>*

### *False economies*

Cuts to public service staffing and pay are bad for businesses and our economy, and will ultimately hit tax revenues and our public finances. For example

- the Public Accounts Committee has warned that skills gaps in **central government departments** are leading to rising expenditure on consultants and temporary staff that can cost two to three times as much as permanent staff and exacerbate the loss of in-house knowledge and experience<sup>58</sup>
- independent consultants have warned that the Government's plan to cut civilian staff at the **Ministry of Defence** "makes little sense" given the costs of diverting service personnel to non-combat roles<sup>59</sup>
- a shortage of experienced staff at the **Planning Inspectorate** is holding up decisions and frustrating efforts to boost housing supply, according to experts including the Home Builders' Federation<sup>60</sup>
- the number of planning applications delayed because of "workload issues, staff absences, availability of specialist expertise" at **Natural England** has increased by 600% over the past four years<sup>61</sup>
- businesses have raised concerns that cuts to staffing at the **Valuation Office Agency** will leave it unable to deal with their queries over new business rates. A leading business tax advisor said the **VOA** "provides an invaluable service to businesses but it is clear to me that it needs further financial resource"<sup>62</sup>
- the Road Haulage Association has said the **Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency** needs to deploy more inspectors to road and site visit enforcement to prevent unsafe hauliers undercutting responsible businesses<sup>63</sup>
- the Freight Transport Association has said the **Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency** needs more examiners to tackle the looming shortfall of qualified drivers in the road haulage sector<sup>64</sup>
- the National Audit Office and Institute for Government has pointed to shortages of key skills in Government as making it harder to ensure good value for money from major infrastructure projects<sup>65</sup>
- a Government-commissioned report on the UK's shipbuilding strategy found that a loss of "expertise in both design and project contract management" within the **Ministry of Defence** had contributed to "significant growth in specification, scale and end cost of ships"<sup>66</sup>

#### **4) PREPARING FOR THE 2020S**

This is Prospect's six-point plan for building the workforce that will be needed to meet the challenges of the 2020s and beyond:

1. A future-facing review of skills and staffing levels
2. A pay strategy to retain talent and close skills gaps
3. A plan to develop the workforce of the future
4. An evidence-based approach to reorganisations and the role of the private sector
5. A diverse, inclusive and representative workforce
6. A new commitment to trade union and employee engagement

It is one we will take every opportunity to advance – in the support we provide to our members, the negotiations we have with their employers, the conversations we have with government, and the campaigns we take to the public.

##### *1. A future-facing review of skills and staffing levels*

Key organisations have lost as many as one in four staff over the past five years, often taking scarce skills and experience with them, while rising workloads risk becoming unsustainable. Prospect is working for:

- **a moratorium on job cuts and compulsory redundancies** in key departments, agencies and services
- **a thorough and comprehensive skills audit**, as called for by the cross-party Public Administration Select Committee, coordinated by the Cabinet Office to identify the resources and expertise the UK needs
- **the preparation and publication of strategic workforce plans**, as called for by the National Audit Office, to ensure we have the specialist, technical, professional and managerial skills we need to meet the challenges of the next decade and beyond

Prospect's evidence to the cross-party **Public Administration Select Committee** informed its 2015 recommendation "that the Cabinet Office ask the National Audit Office to carry out a Civil Service wide skills audit on a regular basis".<sup>67</sup> Similar calls for systematic skills audits and workforce plans have also been made by the Public Accounts Committee,<sup>68</sup> and the National Audit Office itself.<sup>69</sup>

## 2. A pay strategy to retain talent and close skills gaps

Take-home salaries have fallen by as much as 20% in real terms since the recession, and even further behind those paid for comparable positions in the private sector.

Prospect is working for:

- **an independent and evidence-based review of pay rates** and recruitment pressures in key departments, agencies and services
- **replacement of the crude 1% pay cap** and arbitrary bans on progression with a coherent and sustainable plan to close pay gaps with the private sector and stop the “brain drain” of skilled professionals, managers and specialists leaving public service
- **resources and flexibilities** for departments, agencies and public bodies to recruit, retain and develop the staff and skills they need to deliver – learning the lessons of the Pay Bill Control Pilots

At the **Met Office** in Exeter Prospect worked with management to evolve the pay and reward system so that there are clear links between the job, the generic role, the market reference and the pay reward. There is now a fair comparison between disparate roles. There is still a long way to go to correct market lag, because of government pay restraint, but the system has been refined to enable horizontal and vertical movement between jobs giving staff the ability to control their careers and obtain interesting and fulfilling jobs in their preferred areas. For example, an operational meteorologist (forecaster) can transfer their skills and enthusiasm into a scientific research or a business role, gaining work life balance.<sup>70</sup>

Prospect led negotiations that resulted in a commitment to pay the Living Wage to staff at the **National Library of Wales**, helping it retain vital staff, many with scarce skills, and attract new members of staff to the Library.<sup>71</sup> Research has shown the living wage can raise productivity by boosting motivation, skills and retention.<sup>72</sup>

After a ten-year campaign Prospect won a better deal for marine surveyors and specialist staff employed by the **Marine and Coastguard Agency**. This will help tackle chronic recruitment and retention problems by bridging the huge pay differentials between the agency and industry.<sup>73</sup>

### 3. A plan to develop the workforce of the future

Prospect represents and works for people who want to build a career in public service. A brighter future for them means a better future for our country. Prospect is working for:

- **a commitment to develop and realise the potential of every public service employee** so we can “grow our own” talent, expertise and leadership
- **improvements in the quality as well as quantity of public sector apprenticeships**, with guaranteed job prospects and better opportunities for women, minorities and disabled workers
- **a reversal of short-sighted cuts to training budgets** that have had a negative impact on employee satisfaction, reduced opportunities for career progression and eroded long-term capabilities

The Government has set a target of delivering 30,000 **civil service apprenticeships** by 2020. Prospect worked with fellow civil service unions to secure an agreement with the Cabinet Office that guarantees levels of training, job security and opportunities for career progression.<sup>74</sup>

Prospect has played a leading role in building the profile and remit of the **Government Science and Engineering Profession**, and is working with the Science Council to strengthen links with professional registers to provide a clear framework for higher-level skills acquisition and career progression.

### 4. An evidence-based approach to outsourcing and restructuring

Prospect’s approach is pragmatic, not ideological: mergers, reorganisations, outsourcing and privatisations should be based on evidence not driven by perverse incentives or short-term false economies. We are working for:

- **an end to the perverse and costly reliance on external contractors**, consultants and interim staff to get around centrally imposed restrictions on recruitment, headcount, and pay
- **a tough public interest test for all mergers, reorganisations, and privatisation proposals** to ensure long-term sustainability, not short-term cost cutting, paramount
- **retention of in-house skills and expertise** to ensure the public sector is always an “intelligent customer” able to secure value-for-money when dealing with external suppliers and service-providers

Prospect sought and secured assurances from directors of the **Ordnance Survey** that its new status as a Government-owned Company with access to private investment would not jeopardise its public role and standing as a world-leading national mapping agency and provider of geo-spatial information and products.

Prospect's warnings that the closure of the **National Forensic Science Service**, and transfer of functions to in-house police labs and private providers, would compromise standards of scientific evidence have sadly been vindicated by subsequent assessments by the National Audit Office, Science and Technology Committee, and National Forensic Science Regulator.<sup>75</sup>

#### *How public sector research underpins private sector productivity: the case of agriculture*

A report produced for the business department in 2013 recounted the story of the **Plant Breeding Institute**. Its privatisation in the 1980s, and eventual disappearance "robbed the UK of a world-class translational research facility in advanced plant science at precisely the moment when molecular biology was set to revolutionise the field". As a consequence, despite the UK's scientific leadership "the major breeders are abroad and our ability to turn UK discoveries into UK benefit is handicapped."<sup>76</sup>

Advanced farming or "agri-tech" is now seen as an important element of any viable UK industrial strategy. But *The Economist* has suggested that the winding up of public research institutes in the 1980s was a key factor behind the declining competitiveness of British farming over recent decades.<sup>77</sup> One academic analysis has suggested that cuts to public R&D, and knock-on effect on private R&D, account for half of the fall in the sector's productivity growth in recent decades.<sup>78</sup>

#### *5. A representative workforce at every level*

By rooting out discrimination and securing equal opportunities for every employee, Prospect is helping to build a stronger and more effective public service workforce that reflects the citizens it serves. We are working for:

- **the immediate replacement of performance management systems** that can create discriminatory outcomes
- **a duty on all public service employers to report on gender pay gaps** by job and grade or pay band, to identify specific areas of indirect pay discrimination
- **clear targets, benchmarks and accountability for improving mobility** and making all grades more representative, supported by proper mentoring, training and career development

Prospect is helping to build a more diverse **civil service**, for example by training members as mentors to support women in science, technology, engineering and maths, and have sought to work closely with government, departments, agencies and public bodies to implement and improve the Talent Action Plan. Prospect also wants those within the feeder grades for the senior civil service to be able to use development opportunities, including mentoring programmes, to progress..<sup>79</sup>

Prospect led calls to rethink the imposition of an ill-conceived **performance management system** across the civil service that was seen by managers and staff as demotivating, unfair and potentially discriminatory. The Cabinet Office has now accepted the need for reform. Prospect has no problem with fair and effective performance management systems and has committed to working with Government and employers to devise and implement an effective performance management system that has the confidence of staff..<sup>80</sup>

#### *6. A new commitment to trade union and employee engagement*

Prospect has a track record of helping organisations across the public and private sectors manage change fairly and harness the experience and energy of the staff best-placed to contribute ideas for improvement. We are working for

- recognition that **fair treatment, employment security and worker voice**, backed by independent trade union representation, are the foundation of workforce innovation, productivity and service quality
- **identification and application of “best practice” lessons** from successful social partnership approaches seen in Scotland, Wales, and services like the NHS
- **reversal of ideologically motivated restrictions on facility time** that make it harder for voluntary workplace representatives to support good working environments and resolve issues before they turn into disputes

The **Welsh Government** is one area where partnership working between the trade unions and management is well established. The partnership is underpinned by an agreement between the Permanent Secretary and the chair of the trade unions, and cascaded at all levels downwards through each director general and ministerial portfolio area. Trade unions are consulted by HR on policies which govern the way staff are managed as they are revised..<sup>81</sup>

### *The Government's plan for the civil service*

The Government's *Civil Service Workforce Plan: 2016-2020* states that

*"To deliver for the public, we need to maintain a confident, professional, expert Civil Service that speaks truth unto power, where talent and hard work are fairly rewarded, and where execution is first rate."<sup>82</sup>*

To meet the challenges of period ahead, the Government says

*"we need to attract the most capable and public-spirited people Britain has to offer, and build a culture and ways of working that are as good, if not better, than anything on offer anywhere else."*

Prospect supports this ambition. But we need stronger commitments and faster progress on all the key planks of our agenda: staffing, pay, skills, organisational change, diversity, and trade union engagement.

In the civil service Prospect this means:

- applying the lessons of the **Pay Bill control pilots** to give departments and agencies the flexibilities and resources they need to manage recruitment and retention pressures
- a plan to build the role of the **Heads of Profession**, working with designated lead departments, to create the option of cross-departmental reward and deployment frameworks, as seen with digital and commercial staff, and improve development and career pathways for all professions, including access to the senior civil service
- in England, a stronger role for **Civil Service Human Resources (CSHR)** and **Civil Service Employee Policy (CSEP)**, with full engagement and negotiations with Prospect, in coordinating and developing cross-departmental approaches to pay and reward, and support for professionals, managers and specialists to develop their skills and build their careers across the civil service
- measures to ensure that the centralisation of training provision in **Civil Service Learning** does not limit focus to generic capabilities and behavioural competences at the expense of vital specialist, technical and functional skills
- the provision of greater flexibilities to **Government Owed Companies and Trading Funds** to develop and use revenue streams to recruit and retain the skilled staff they need – while ensuring reliance on external funding does not compromise public interest goals
- decoupling of **Non Departmental Public Bodies** from civil service pay remit guidance to allow them more freedom to manage their own workforce and resources

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