



# UKMA news

The newsletter of the UK Metric Association  
For a **single** *rational* system of measurement

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## Editor of UKMA News

UKMA News has not had a regular editor since the untimely death of Martin Clutterbuck over two years ago.

If you think you might be able to take on the role, then please contact the Secretary, [secretary@metric.org.uk](mailto:secretary@metric.org.uk)

Rudimentary desktop publishing skills and a few spare hours every three months are all that you will need.

We aim to prepare four newsletters each year. The Committee regrets that only three have appeared in 2018.

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## Feedback page

An innovation in this edition of UKMA News is a feedback page, emulating the letters page in daily and local newspapers. It appears on page 5.

If you wish to contribute, please e-mail the Secretary.

With UKMA News appearing, at best, every three months, it is possible that social media now provide a better route for feedback. Time will tell.

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## Seasons Greetings

The Acting Editor and the Committee wish all our readers a Happy Christmas and a successful New Year, which likely to prove an eventful one, even though the UK's metric changeover may have stalled.

# **UKMA news - the newsletter of the UK Metric Association**

## **Association News**

### **Annual Conference 2018 (and Brexit)**

It is now more than 24 months since the referendum and there are less than four months to go before exit day, yet the uncertainty continues. This uncertainty overshadowed the Conference, as it did in 2016 and 2017.

At the Annual Conference, there was a discussion of the likely consequences of several possible outcomes of the Brexit negotiations. The discussion then quickly moved on to the UK's metric changeover, past, present and future. The media coverage of this year's heat wave was reviewed, there was a presentation on the Report of 1819 which had led directly to the current mess of measurement units. There was then a discussion on progress, or lack thereof, on UK road traffic signs. A member outlined Canada's experience of metrication, "living next to a bossy neighbour", before the Conference moved on to discussing an awards scheme and other organisational matters.

A full report of the Conference discussions can be obtained by contacting the Secretary.

### **Chair(man) for 2019-20**

The post remains vacant, there being no nomination during this year's Committee election. If you might consider standing next year and would like to know what is involved, you can contact the Secretary or any member of the Committee.

### **Subscription rates for 2018-19**

It was resolved at the AGM that subscription rates should remain unchanged. They are:

Member annual	£15.00
Member annual by standing order	£10.00
Member (concession) annual	£5.00
Member life	£150.00

### **Day and month of the AGM and Annual Conference**

The Committee have been considering this issue, and it was also discussed at the Annual Conference. Saturday or Sunday? June, July or September? If you have a preference. please let the Secretary know.

### **'Turn the UK fully metric now'**

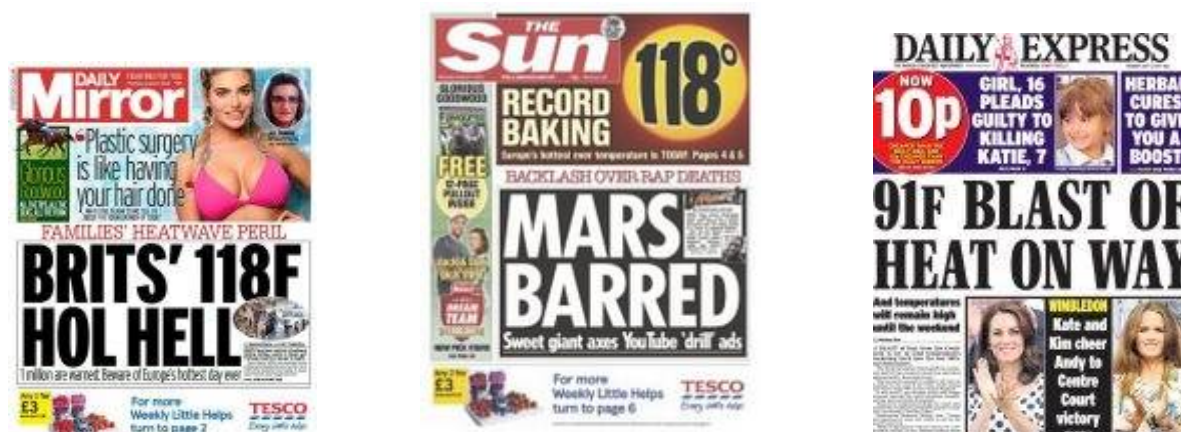
The owner and moderator of the Facebook page, 'Turn the UK fully metric now', who is independent of UKMA, is looking for assistance. If you think you might be able to help, please leave a comment to this effect on the page or e-mail [secretary@metric.org.uk](mailto:secretary@metric.org.uk)

## UKMA News - the newsletter of the UK Metric Association

### UK News Stories

#### The heat wave of 2018

Some, but not all, of the tabloids reverted to Fahrenheit to provide some sensationalist spice to their coverage of this year's heat wave. Here are the front pages of some of those still stuck in the past:



And, in contrast, here are some of those who have moved on:



#### The Commission's Report of 1819

There was a presentation at the Annual Conference about the 1816 report of the Select Committee on the Original Standards of Weights and Measures and the reports of 1819, 1821 and 1822 by the Commissioners appointed to consider weights and measures. These reports led to the Weights and Measures Act of 1824, to the so-called imperial system of measures, and to the UK's current measurement muddle. Had the Commissioners seen the potential of the metric system, history could have taken a very different turn.

The Committee will be considering how to mark this anniversary. Readers' suggestions are welcomed.

A copy of the Powerpoint presentation, entitled "An opportunity missed", that was given at the Conference, is available from the Secretary.

## UKMA News - the newsletter of the UK Metric Association

### UK's measurement muddle gets a mention at the European Parliament

The subject of measurement units has been conspicuously absent from the debate in recent years about the UK's future relations with the EU. But there was a brief mention on 23 October when Guy Verhofstadt, the European Parliament's Brexit co-ordinator, joked: "I know Britain has always had difficulties with the metric system."

Of the four EU countries that were using imperial measurements at the time of their accession, three have converted their road traffic signs, namely Cyprus, Malta and the Republic of Ireland. Only the UK has not. The UKMA Metrication Board had suggested the job should be done in 1973. But after repeated postponements, plans were abandoned with an announcement from the UK Government in 2006 that, "It had saved the pint and the mile". Our continental neighbours must have looked on with a mixture of amazement, that a trading rival should handicap itself in this manner, and of annoyance, that an obligation freely entered into should be casually abandoned. But they were too polite to say anything.

That is until a month ago.

### Two kinds of country

An article on Metric Views, posted on 16 October, discussed the use of metric measures in the US Apollo program, culminating in the moon landings between 1969 and 1972:

<http://metricviews.org.uk/2018/10/two-kinds-of-country/>

This meme relates to the article:



The article was prompted by the release of "First Man", a film about Neil Armstrong who, nearly 50 years ago, was the first man to walk on the Moon. One of mankind's greatest achievements.

Amongst the conspiracy theories and misinformation surrounding the Apollo missions, there is an anti-metric meme, sometimes used on social media, that asserts that NASA did not use the metric system in the Moon landings. The meme reads something like this: "There are two kinds of country – Those that use the metric system, and those that have landed on the Moon." The article refutes that view with information about the extensive use of metric measures in the Apollo program.

## UKMA News - the newsletter of the UK Metric Association

### Readers' feedback

MW of Telford asks,

“Shouldn't we be referring to the UK's 'measurement upgrade' rather than 'metrication' or the 'metric changeover'?”

AD of Rochdale writes,

“I've noticed a creeping trend where coffee shops (both chains and independents) display cup sizes in fluid ounces only. Is there anything UKMA as an organisation can do to campaign against this? “

MV of Fleet, Hants comments,

“On reading the article on heating for the elderly, one thought crossed my mind – any thermostat that is calibrated in Fahrenheit probably needs replacing as it is likely to be over 40 years old! Advice concerning heating for the elderly should therefore give degrees Celsius only with a note that devices that display Fahrenheit only are probably unreliable due to age.”

KM, a follower on our Facebook page, puts us on the spot,

“One question I have is: why don't you/we adopt a more robust campaigning tone? Many of the examples in the newsletter seem to describe things in a way which views them as somewhat cute British eccentricities, rather than ridiculous anomalies in the modern, globalised world.

While I understand that UKMA doesn't take a position on the UK's membership/relationship with the EU per se, I do think we need to take the clear view that the preservation of the British tradition that is the imperial system is silly and retrograde, and that this is indeed an aspect of British society and culture where we feel homogenisation with the rest of the world is on balance absolutely a good thing - and be clear and unashamed about that and the reasons why.

What are your thoughts?”

Finally, PO of St Albans, Herts, writes,

“The consultation on the new Lower Thames Crossing has opened recently - a good chance to make the point 'Metric only please'”.

### About UKMA News

UKMA News is published by the UK Metric Association, the object of which is to promote the full adoption of the International System of Units (SI), commonly known as 'the metric system', as the legal and default system of weights and measures throughout society in the United Kingdom.

The Editor welcomes your feedback and comments on UKMA News or the UK's stalled metric changeover (upgrade?). To submit, or if you no longer wish to receive UKMA News, please e-mail [secretary@metric.org.uk](mailto:secretary@metric.org.uk)



# UKMA News - the newsletter of the UK Metric Association

## UKMA Style Guide

In 2012, UKMA produced a measurement units style guide. This was based on British and internationally agreed standards, and represents best practice. It gives guidance on how to use and write metric units, mistakes to avoid, what to do about conversions, and where to find further information. It also gives a brief explanation of the principles of the metric system.

Copies were sent to the Editors of national and local newspapers. It has to be said that it was hard to detect any noticeable improvement following this initiative.

An updated and interactive version of the style guide is now available on UKMA's main web site: <https://ukma.org.uk/style-guide/>

A copy of the original printed style guide may also be downloaded from the web site.

## Recent articles posted on Metric Views

Here is a summary of the articles posted on Metric Views, [www.metricviews.org.uk](http://www.metricviews.org.uk), since the last edition of this newsletter:

"2017 Laws of Cricket." Posted on 30 July. 4 comments.

"London speed limits make front page news." Posted on 9 August. 10 comments.

"Vehicle fuel consumption – another muddle." Posted on 16 August. 12 comments.

"Style Guide revisited." Posted on 23 August. 21 comments.

"43 years late." Posted on 31 August. 3 comments.

"Read it before?." Posted on 21 September. 5 comments.

"Two kinds of country." Posted on 16 October. 8 comments.

"Imperial echoes in GBBO." Posted 31 October. 1 comment.

"The new £50 note." Posted on 2 November. 12 comments.

"Is perfect the enemy of good?" Posted on 10 November. 13 comments.

"The kilogram rejuvenated." Posted on 16 November. 2 comments.

"Think metric – don't convert." Posted on 29 November. No comment so far.

Draft articles for Metric Views are welcome and should be e-mailed to [secretary@metric.org.uk](mailto:secretary@metric.org.uk)

## **UKMA News - the newsletter of the UK Metric Association**

### **Can you help?**

The Committee is looking for volunteers who may be able to help in the following areas:

- Responding to technical consultations by ISO and BSI.
- Preparing web-friendly versions of UKMA News for PCs, i-pads, i-phones and android devices such as tablets and mobile phones.
- Responding to calls to appear on broadcast media, for example local radio.
- Reviewing printed media for stories to link to our Twitter and Facebook pages.
- Assisting with the production of material for uploading to YouTube.
- Editing this newsletter

If you think you may be able to help, please contact [secretary@metric.org.uk](mailto:secretary@metric.org.uk)

### **Where to find UKMA on the internet**

UKMA began as an internet forum, and the internet is our principal vehicle for carrying our message to the public. We now have:

The main UKMA web site, [www.ukma.org.uk](http://www.ukma.org.uk)

A factual web site, [www.thinkmetric.org.uk](http://www.thinkmetric.org.uk)

A blog, [www.metricviews.org.uk](http://www.metricviews.org.uk)

A Twitter page, <http://twitter.com/UKMetric>

A YouTube channel, [www.youtube.com/user/UKMetric](http://www.youtube.com/user/UKMetric)

These are available to all, not just members.

There is also a Facebook page and a Facebook group, open anyone who can log onto Facebook.

### **Membership of UKMA – a note for readers who are not members.**

An application form for membership of UKMA appears on the final page of this edition of UKMA News. The Annual subscription is £15 or £10 paid by standing order, concessions £5. The subscription year runs from July until the following June.

Benefits of membership include:

- Participation in a Google Group, open only to members.
- Participation in the annual election of the Committee.
- Participation in the AGM and annual Conference
- Eligibility for election to the Committee

## UKMA News - the newsletter of the UK Metric Association

### UKMA membership application form

Thank you for your interest in joining the UK Metric Association (UKMA).

Please fill in your details below:

<b>Name</b>	
Home postal address	
Town	
County/Country	
Postcode	
Daytime telephone	
Evening telephone	
Mobile telephone	
e-mail address	

(Please delete below as applicable.)

I wish to support the UK Metric Association through membership.

I understand the objectives of the UK Metric Association (UKMA) and agree with them. I have received the Constitution of UKMA.

I agree that my participation in UKMA activities will be legal, ethical and consistent with its objectives.

I am willing to be contacted by e-mail at the e-mail address above

I enclose a cheque (payable to 'UK Metric Association') to cover:

Individual subscription of £15 (annual)

Concessionary subscription of £5 (annual)

I enclose a completed standing order form in favour of UKMA for £10.00 per year.

I have made a payment through Paypal using the UKMA web site, [www.ukma.org.uk](http://www.ukma.org.uk)

Signed .....

Date .....

Please return to Secretary, UKMA, 34 Wroxham Gardens, London, N11 2BA, or to [secretary@metric.org.uk](mailto:secretary@metric.org.uk), from whom a standing order form may be obtained.