

Press release: Environmental performance of business continues to improve report shows

Every year, the regulator publishes its Regulating for People, the Environment and Growth (RPEG) report which sets out the regulatory performance of businesses holding environmental permits in England and the effectiveness of the EA's regulatory approach.

The report shows that 93% of the 14,000 businesses the EA regulates demonstrated good compliance with their environmental permit conditions. Businesses which harmed the environment, however faced record penalties. A total of £25.5 million in fines were issued by the courts for environmental offences brought by the Agency compared to £8 million last year.

Waste crime continues to blight communities, cause environmental harm, and undercut legitimate business. The Environment Agency is closing more than two illegal waste sites every day but discovering a similar number of new illegal sites. The report acknowledges waste crime is becoming more organised and that more needs to be done. This will be addressed in the government's forthcoming organised waste crime review, which has examined how the Environment Agency, partners, and the law enforcement system can best tackle the problem.

The report also highlights the increased use of Enforcement Undertakings for less serious environmental incidents. In 2017/18 there were a record £2.2 million worth of Enforcement Undertakings accepted by the Agency. By companies admitting liability and making a financial contribution to put right the harm they have caused, both the environment and communities benefit.

Other key findings include:

- 812 illegal waste sites were shutdown in 2017/18; more than 2 a day.
- Serious pollution incidents fell to 419, down 18% compared to 2016.
- The number of persistently poorly managed sites reduced by 18% compared to 2016.
- Environmental charities, organisations and projects received almost £2.2 million, compared to £0.9 million in 2016, in Enforcement Undertakings.

Harvey Bradshaw, Executive Director of the Environment Agency, said:

Our regulation is supporting a healthier environment and safer communities – serious pollution incidents fell by 18%. We closed down over 800 illegal waste sites, and the courts have imposed record levels of fines on companies for environmental offences.

We are committed to supporting businesses to innovate and grow, in

return, we expect that businesses take their responsibilities to protecting the environment seriously.

The report can be found [here](#)

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News story: Pregabalin and gabapentin to be controlled as class C drugs

Prescription drugs pregabalin and gabapentin are to be reclassified as class C controlled substances from next April, the Government announced today (15 October).

Today's move comes after experts highlighted rising numbers of fatalities linked to the drugs. The change means it will be illegal to possess pregabalin and gabapentin without a prescription and it will be illegal to supply or sell them to others.

The drugs, which are used to treat nerve pain, epilepsy and anxiety, can bring about an elevated mood in users but can also have serious side effects, particularly when used in combination with other drugs.

In 2016, the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) raised concerns over medicinal misuse, illegal diversion of the drugs and addiction, and recommended that pregabalin and gabapentin should be controlled as Class C Drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

The Government accepted the ACMD's advice and launched a public consultation to assess the impact on the healthcare sector. Pharmacies, doctors, pharmaceutical companies and patients responded to the [consultation](#), which has been published today, backing the tighter controls of the drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations.

Regulations implementing the change in law to control the drugs will be laid in Parliament on Wednesday.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability Victoria Atkins said:

Any death related to the misuse of drugs is a tragedy. We accepted expert advice and will now change the law to help prevent misuse of pregabalin and gabapentin and addiction to them.

While drug misuse is lower now than it was ten years ago, we remain committed to reducing it and the harm it causes.

That is why we have published a comprehensive strategy to tackle the illicit drug trade, protect the most vulnerable and help those with drug dependency to recover and turn their lives around.

The law change will mean the drugs are still available for legitimate use on prescription, but there will be stronger controls in place to ensure accountability and minimise the chances of pregabalin and gabapentin falling into the wrong hands or being stockpiled by patients.

Doctors will now need to physically sign prescriptions, rather than electronic copies being accepted by pharmacists. In addition, pharmacists must dispense the drugs within 28 days of the prescription being written.

To ensure that there is enough lead in time for those in the health care sector to adapt to the new measures, they will come into force in April 2019.

[News story: Clean maritime revolution starts voyage](#)

Experts on clean shipping met today (15 October 2018), to plot the route to zero emissions for the UK maritime sector on the first day of [Green Great Britain Week](#).

Minister for Maritime Nusrat Ghani opened the first meeting of the Clean Maritime Council, which will devise a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the sector to improve air quality on and around our waterways, ports and shipping lanes.

The government is clear on the need for action on emissions from shipping. Air pollution is the fourth greatest threat to public health after cancer, heart disease and obesity. In 2016, domestic shipping accounted for 11% of the country's nitrogen oxide emissions.

The Council has an important role in addressing these issues, bringing together experts from across the maritime sector – from industry leaders developing greener vessels, to academics studying the economics of emission reduction.

Maritime Minister Nusrat Ghani said:

The UK maritime industry has a vital role in improving air quality on and around water, and council members will be looking at innovative and practical ways to reduce emissions from the sector.

The Clean Maritime Plan will bring new opportunities for Britain's businesses to design, develop and sell green solutions to this global challenge.

The UK is already actively developing plans to reduce emissions from shipping, for example:

- hybrid ferries using battery power alongside traditional engines are being used between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight and in Scotland
- shore-side electricity is already in place at Portsmouth (MOD), Fraserburgh and Brodick to reduce engines running at ports
- Innovate UK is funding a project in Orkney to directly inject hydrogen into the fuel supply of a ferry

The country also played a leading role at the [International Maritime Organization](#) in setting a global cap on sulphur emissions and establishing a new global target to cut shipping's greenhouse gases by at least 50% by 2050. The Council further demonstrates the serious commitment we are making for the future of the sector, ensuring the UK can benefit from the global shift to zero-emission shipping.

The environment is also one of the main strands of the [government's Maritime 2050 strategy](#), a long term look at the opportunities for the sector for the next 30 years.

The clean maritime plan will be published next year and will include policies to tackle emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gases from shipping, while ensuring the UK can reap the economic benefits of the global transition to zero emission shipping.

[Press release: New Charity Inquiry: Future Vision Care and Future Vision Consortium](#)

The Charity Commission, has opened a class statutory inquiry into Future Vision Care and Future Vision Consortium. The inquiry was opened on 24 August 2018.

Future Vision Consortium is a charity whose objects include the relief of poverty, sickness and the advancement of education to the British public as

well as Somalia, by providing grants, advocacy, advice and translation services. The charity is connected to Future Vision Care, an unregistered charitable company which provides professional care services to the elderly and needy.

Despite being unregistered, Future Vision Care falls under the Commission's jurisdiction as it has been set up for exclusively charitable purposes and is subject to the control of the High Court's charity law jurisdiction.

In October 2017, the registered charity was included in the Commission's [double defaulter class statutory inquiry](#), which looked into charities that had defaulted on their annual reporting obligations two or more times in the last 5 years. Although the charity has now submitted accounts, they are invalid as they are for Future Vision Care and not Future Vision Consortium. Both charities have the same trustees.

The financial information submitted to the Commission raised serious regulatory concerns about the administration, management and governance of both charities by the trustees. In particular there are concerns that charitable funds are being placed at risk, as not only is it unclear how Future Vision Consortium has applied its funds, but Future Vision Care's accounts do not provide a clear explanation of how its income is applied in furtherance of its objects for the benefit of the public. Additionally, there are concerns about unauthorised payments to a trustee and whether the charities are being operated separately.

As a result of its ongoing failure to submit valid accounts and the further concerns outlined above, Future Vision Consortium was removed from the double defaulter class inquiry and placed into a separate class inquiry with Future Vision Care.

This new class inquiry will look into:

- The administration, governance and management of the charities, in particular the extent to which the trustees have:
 - Complied with their duties to wind up and request removal from the register of any charity that has ceased to operate and to apply to register any charity that is under their control if required to do so under s30 of the Charities Act 2011
 - Complied with their legal obligations for the preparation and filing of the charities accounts and other information or returns
 - Carried out activities in furtherance of the charities objects and ensured that the charities are operating for the public benefit
 - Complied with previously issued regulatory guidance as issued to the registered charity in October 2017 when it was included in the double defaulter class inquiry
 - Properly authorised and monitored any benefits and/or remuneration to trustees and/or connected parties
- The extent to which any weaknesses in the management and administration

of the charities identified by the inquiry were a result of misconduct and/or mismanagement by the trustees

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were. Reports of previous inquiries by the Commission are available on [GOV.UK](#).

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work see the [about us](#) page on GOV.UK.
2. Search for charities on our [check charity](#) tool.
3. Section 30 of the Charities Act 2011 requires trustees to register a charity unless the exceptions set out in Section 30(2) apply which include having a gross income which does not exceed £5,000.
4. Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to institute inquiries. The opening of an inquiry gives the commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers.