

News story: Soft drinks businesses urged to register before levy deadline

The government is urging businesses to meet the 30 April 2018 registration deadline for the Soft Drinks Industry Levy (SDIL).

Since the new levy was announced in March 2016, many manufacturers have registered for the levy and reduced their sugar content, but some importers, producers and packagers of soft drinks still need to do this.

It is a criminal offence to fail to register, and to fail to register before the deadline.

David Richardson, Director General for Customer Strategy and Tax Design, said:

The UK has one of the highest obesity rates among developed countries. Soft drinks are still the biggest source of sugar in children's diets – this is why this levy is so important.

HMRC has published clear guidance on GOV.UK about where the levy does and doesn't apply, who may need to take action and when. I encourage all businesses in the soft drinks industry who have not yet done so to read our guidance and review the deadlines for registration.

There are different rules about when registration for the levy needs to take place, depending on how and when drinks liable for the levy are handled.

The SDIL was introduced on 6 April 2018.

Small producers

If you are classed as a 'small producer', you are not liable for the levy – [you can check](#) whether this includes your business.

Improving school sports

Income generated from the levy will help double the Primary Sports Premium, create a Healthy Pupils Capital Fund to help schools upgrade their sports facilities, and provide children with PE equipment. It will also boost funding for healthy school breakfast clubs.

Press release: Tyre-related deaths and injuries preventable say Highways England and Bridgestone

More than 30 people were killed or seriously injured in motorway accidents in 2016 due to illegal or faulty tyres.

But an 18-month study says commuters, commercial drivers and other road users can do a lot more to help reduce accidents through regular checking.

[To see Bridgestone's tyre debris study brought to life, visit:](#)

Richard Leonard, Highways England's head of road safety, said:

England's motorways are the safest in the world but we're determined to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured on them.

This important research confirms our view that road users must play a bigger role and get into the habit of checking tyre pressures and tread depths and looking out for nails and other debris stuck in tyres before setting out on journeys. These simple checks could save lives.

Unveiled today at the annual Commercial Vehicle Show at Birmingham's NEC, the research reveals that almost three quarters of tyre failure samples analysed by Bridgestone involved poor inflation or debris penetration issues – problems which could be potentially avoided with better tyre husbandry.

Both Bridgestone and Highways England, the government company for operating, maintaining and improving the country's motorways and major A roads, are partners in the multi-agency road safety charity Tyresafe. They worked together to carry out the research over 18 months between the beginning of 2016 and last summer.

During the project, staff working for Highways England at depots across the West Midlands provided more than 1,000 pieces of tyre debris from motorways to a technical engineering team from Bridgestone to analyse.

The findings from 1035 tyre segments retrieved from the M1, M6, M40, M5 and M42 revealed:

- 56% of tyres failed due to road/yard debris penetration
- 18% failed due to poor inflation
- 8% failed due to poor vehicle maintenance
- 1% of tyres failed due to manufacturing defects
- 1% of tyres failed due to excessive heat

- 16% of the tyres couldn't be specified to one particular problem

The tyre debris was taken from cars, vans, commercial vehicles and motorbikes, with under-inflation of tyres a key theme, along with poor vehicle maintenance, both of which accounted for 26% of the entire sample. When considering that 32 people were killed or seriously injured in motorway road traffic accidents in 2016 due to 'illegal, defective or underinflated tyres' Bridgestone and Highways England say simple tyre checks save lives.

In addition, the cost to the economy from a 2-hour delay on a busy stretch of motorway following a 2-lane closure stands at £135,360 and a massive £1,488,960 for a 3-lane closure lasting up to four hours .

Some of the samples were particularly alarming, with a temporary 'space-saver' spare tyre being run to destruction, while a number of potentially lethal and illegal 'string' repairs were also found on car tyres, which are completely unsuitable at any speed, let alone 70mph speeds on motorways.

Bridgestone technical manager Gary Powell, who oversaw the analysis of the debris with field engineer Peter Moulding and the rest of the firm's technical department, said:

This report has taken a great deal of time and effort, involving a painstaking process of collecting tyre debris over 18 months and analysing it in depth thereafter. In conclusion, some simple tyre checks can save lives, not to mention reduce the risk of a stressful breakdown on a motorway.

With proper vehicle inspection and maintenance programs, many of the failure methods noted should be detectable and preventable. In light of these results, we would also advise that tyre pressure monitoring systems (TPMS) are fitted to vehicles which don't benefit from this technology already. It will assist with the detection of penetrations and deflations.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

News story: Better connections to ports to help business growth

Better connections to English ports could help businesses thrive and boost the nation's economy, a new study published today shows (Tuesday, 24 April 2018).

The study of England's port connectivity, launched at the British Port Association annual member's lunch, will help influence funding, policy and planning decisions by highlighting the importance of England's harbours and their global trade links. It also shows how ports can flourish by improving connections to inland businesses

Improved road and rail links can provide more effective freight journeys between key economic areas and ports, boosting productivity, lowering costs and giving access to international markets.

Shipping Minister Nusrat Ghani said:

The nation's ports are crucial to our success, contributing £5.4 billion to our economy.

Shipping is still one of the most efficient way of transporting goods from across the globe into our homes. But the journey doesn't stop at a port. Good connections to distributors and manufacturers are also vital in ensuring that products reach our shelves without delay.

Better links won't just boost imports, but will also support British companies that export products across the globe, helping them exploit new international trade opportunities.

Promotional video for ports

As the report makes clear, extensive government investment is already improving port access, unlocking private sector investment and economic growth across the country with £235 million invested between 2014 and 2019 to improve rail links and £23 billion to provide better journeys on England's roads.

Alec Don, chairman of British Ports Association, said:

I am delighted that the government has recognised the importance of port connectivity.

UK ports have over £1.7 billion of new private infrastructure investment in the pipeline and the industry relies on there being

good connections onward from the port gate. 95% of UK trade moves by sea and so ensuring that our trading gateways are connected is critical to the ongoing health of our economy.

We hope the government will build on this good work, and future infrastructure and investment planning prioritises the free and efficient movement of freight.

The report also offers a series of recommendations for government and industry on how to raise the profile of shipping, encourage closer collaboration on freight, and improve information-sharing. This will deliver an ambitious vision for the long term future of port connectivity, linking in with the [government's long term strategy, Maritime 2050](#).

James Cooper, chairman of the UK Major Ports Group, said:

The port connectivity study is very welcome. UK Major Ports Group members invest more than half a billion pounds a year in UK ports and infrastructure but for the UK to maximise the value of this investment for the nation these ports need to be well connected to the rest of the economy.

As the UK nears Brexit, it's vital that there is a focus on ensuring that we have the right infrastructure to enable trade. The study's recognition of the need to take a joined up, multi modal approach to key trade enabling freight corridors anchored on major ports is particularly welcome.

Statement to Parliament: Transport infrastructure for our global future: a study of England's port connectivity and supporting documents

I am today (24 April 2018) publishing the government's report on port connectivity, entitled [Transport infrastructure for our global future: a study of England's port connectivity](#).

This country's ports are a modern success story. At present around 95% of all goods entering and leaving Britain are moved by sea and the port sector directly contributes £1.7 billion to the UK economy. Once factors such as supply chains are considered, [the port sector's economic contribution to the](#)

[UK is estimated to be £5.4 billion per annum.](#)

This role ports play in facilitating trade and driving economic growth is only likely to increase. As an island our ports are fundamental to our global success as an outward-facing trading nation. Ports are investing many billions of pounds in their own infrastructure to ensure larger ships and volumes can be accommodated, and so that England continues to be a key destination for global trade. It is therefore vital there is appropriate capacity on our inland transport network, to and from our international gateway ports, to meet demand.

As part of a wider commitment, government is making investment totalling over £60 billion in this Parliament alone to improve our transport networks as a whole, including freight connectivity.

This connectivity supports the movement of everything to and from our ports which are vital to our everyday lives from providing fuel to our power stations to generate electricity for our homes, to transporting the produce to our supermarkets so we have food to eat.

‘Transport infrastructure for our global future: a study of England’s port connectivity’ sets out our vision for how we can continue to grow a thriving English port sector and how collaboration and innovation by government and industry can enhance the trade, economic and productivity benefits delivered by ports.

The report has been developed with input from Network Rail, Highways England, the port and wider freight industry, and its customers. In doing so the study has looked at the current challenges and opportunities for port and freight connectivity, and makes specific recommendations which the government and industry can work together to achieve.

A copy of the study has been placed in the library of both Houses and is also available on GOV.UK, together with the supporting regional case studies report on connectivity.

Ports policy is fully devolved to the Scottish and Northern Ireland governments. In Wales, responsibility for fishing ports only was devolved to the Welsh Government but from 1 April 2018, powers in the Wales Act 2017 will see further devolution to include all ports wholly in Wales, other than reserved trust ports (Milford Haven is the only one of these) for which the UK government retains responsibility. An overview of Milford Haven’s connectivity is included in the supplementary case study document for information, but the recommendations are not intended for implementation in Wales.

Press release: Maintenance work starts on Shrewsbury flood defence

The existing flood defences consist of a flood wall that has a strong concrete core. The work being carried out is replacing the sandstone cladding that covers the main part of the wall, that helps protect homes and businesses from flooding.

Locals will know that the sandstone has recently been showing signs of wear and tear. So, the Environment Agency is pleased to replace the cladding, to make sure the flood wall is well maintained and is in keeping with the surrounding area.

While this work is happening there is no change to the standard of protection offered by the flood defence and the repairs taking place are mainly for aesthetic and public safety purposes. In the event that the demountable flood barriers at Frankwell are required, the repair works will not affect any aspect of the deployment and the flood defence will still continue to perform normally and effectively at times of flood.

The work is expected to take approximately 3 weeks to complete, and throughout the works, access for the public around the work and to the life buoys will be maintained.

Toby Whitehouse from the Environment Agency said:

We're pleased to be able to carry out this work. While it is largely cosmetic as no work is needed on the main concrete core of the flood wall, we're keen to make sure flood defences remain in keeping with the area.

We would like to thank Shropshire Council for arranging the path to be temporarily diverted and for allowing us access to the Theatre Severn car park to store equipment during the work.

The Frankwell flood alleviation scheme reduces the risk of flooding from the River Severn. The scheme consists of a series of permanent flood walls (700m) and demountable slats (155m) along the north bank of the Severn as it flows to the north of Shrewsbury Town Centre.