

[News story: Statement on Ofwat and rebuilding public trust in the water sector](#)

Ofwat, the economic regulator of the water sector in England and Wales, has set out its [agenda](#) for rebuilding public trust in the water sector.

On 31 January, Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Defra, wrote to Jonson Cox, Chairman of Ofwat, asking him to investigate what changes could be made to improve water companies' corporate behaviours.

The Environment Agency regulates the environmental performance of water companies. In February, the Environment Agency released the [State of the Environment report for water quality](#).

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

“We welcome the Secretary of State and Ofwat’s call for water companies to act as diligently for their customers and the natural world as their owners. Jonson Cox says they should consider sharing water resources better. Today, the Environment Agency is meeting senior water company representatives to agree how to increase collaboration and coordination across the sector.

“Since 2005, the water industry has invested billions in the environment and brought compliance for discharge at wastewater treatment works to 99 per cent, but this is not a moment for congratulations. Water companies are responsible for at least one serious pollution incident every week. The courts need to make fines for pollution incidents proportionate to the turnover of companies. Sentencing guidelines in 2014 did bring in higher fines for environmental offences, but financial penalties must force board members to seriously consider environment risk, and not see it as an operational expense.

“In line with the ambition of the 25 Year Environment Plan, water companies also need to do more to act on climate change. England’s flood and drought risks are increasing so we need to see more action to provide water security. Water companies shouldn’t think of climate resilience as just expenditure. On Friday, Mark Carney spoke of the major opportunity for investors and creditors it brings in long-term infrastructure.”

[Press release: World-leading cyber](#)

centre to be developed in London's Olympic Park

A new world-first £13.5 million cyber innovation centre, located in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, will help secure the UK's position as a global leader in the growing cyber security sector.

The London Cyber Innovation Centre will boost the thriving East London digital cluster and spur the development of cutting-edge technology to keep the nation safe from online threats. Estimates suggest it could also help create 2,000 UK jobs in cyber security.

Startups chosen for the scheme will work with large firms as they identify cyber security challenges critical to their businesses. This will help make sure the UK's leading entrepreneurs are creating solutions large firms need as well as securing commercial contracts and crucial investment.

A tech company was formed every hour in London in 2017 and firms attracted almost £3 billion in venture capital investment. The centre will act as a catalyst for startups and help the UK increase its slice of the global cyber security industry forecast to be worth £69 billion in 2018.

Margot James, Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries, said:

“London is the undisputed leader of European tech, with billions of investment flowing in every year and world-leading firms developing groundbreaking innovations.

“This new centre in the Olympic Park will build on the site's legacy of excellence and spark a wave of creativity to develop the cyber security technology of the future and help protect the nation's industry.”

The new centre will be run by Plexal from its Here East headquarters, and is being funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport as part of the Government's five-year, £1.9 billion investment to keep the UK safe online.

The centre will offer a tailored programme of support to at least 72 companies over three years and is open to firms from across the UK. Other startups not on the programme will also be able to access the centre's support and facilities.

Those chosen for the scheme will benefit from dedicated technical and engineering support from some of the world's leading authorities on cyber security, state-of-the-art technology facilities and mentoring and professional business advice. They will also have access to an international network of cyber clusters to bring trade and investment opportunities on a global scale.

Claire Cockerton, CEO and founder of Plexal, said:

“The UK has a strong heritage in tech innovation and a fertile business environment for start-ups to grow. But our future international standing as a world-leading digitally-enabled economy depends on a robust and forward-thinking cyber security sector.

“The centre will help this to develop by delivering bespoke business development programmes, engineering resource, professional services, access to corporate buyers and ambitious investors. Our mission is to bring the whole industry together to accelerate innovation, entrepreneurship and business growth for UK PLC.”

Robert Hannigan, former director of GCHQ, said:

“The London Cyber Innovation Centre will be the launch pad for a whole generation of new cyber security companies, benefiting both the UK’s economy and its security. By combining academic excellence, expertise in innovation and access to investment, the Centre is uniquely placed to secure this country’s preeminent position in cyber security.”

Alan Foreman, CEO B-Secur, said:

“I am thrilled to hear about the creation of the London Cyber Innovation Centre. It will offer a great platform for start-up in the cyber sector. Centres of this nature will be instrumental in the growth of cyber security innovators across the UK and I really look forward to getting involved in LCIC.”

Further info and notes to editors

- Plexal, which operates London’s largest innovation space, will run the centre. The firm specialises in helping high-tech startups in artificial intelligence, augmented reality and the Internet of Things. It recently launched Plexiglass, a development programme for women-led startups, with Barclays and the London Legacy Development Corporation.
- Plexal opened in June 2017 and joined a growing tech community in the Olympic Park, including University College London’s Robotics Lab, Ford’s Smart Mobility Innovation Office, the Advanced Propulsion Centre and Loughborough University. Transport for London and HMRC have also announced they will open new headquarters on the Stratford site.
- The firm will partner with the Centre for Secure Information Technologies at Queen’s University Belfast, the UK’s Innovation and Knowledge Centre (IKC) for secure information technologies, and Deloitte. This will help develop a pipeline of talent and the commercialisation of research.

- It is one of two new centres being developed by government to grow the UK's cyber security sector and make sure the UK is the safest place to live and do business online.
- An innovation centre in Cheltenham opened in early 2017 with the launch of the GCHQ Cyber Accelerator programme. Seven startups have graduated with a further nine companies currently taking part in an extended nine-month programme.
- This initiative is part of the Government's £1.9 billion investment to significantly transform the UK's cyber security. The 2016-2021 National Cyber Security Strategy sets out how the UK Government will deliver a UK that is secure and resilient to cyber threats, prosperous and confident in the digital world. The National Cyber Security Programme managed by the Cabinet Office coordinates the work undertaken to implement the UK's National Cyber Security Strategy.
- London is also home to the headquarters of the National Cyber Security Centre.
- Firms in the programme will have access to international cyber security networks via the Global Ecosystem of Ecosystems Partnership in Innovation and Cybersecurity (Global EPIC).
- Sources: Tech Nation 2017 and PitchBook data sourced by London and Partners. Gartner Forecast Information Security , Worldwide, 3Q17 Update (<https://www.gartner.com/newsroom/id/3836563>)
- Media enquiries – please contact the DCMS News and Communications team on 020 7211 2210.

Press release: Secretary of State reaffirms commitment of UK Government to Belfast Agreement

Speaking after her bilateral meeting this afternoon with An Tánaiste, Simon Coveney TD, the Secretary of State reaffirmed the commitment of the United Kingdom Government to the 1998 Agreement.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP said:

The Agreement reached on 10 April 1998 offered the prospect of a new beginning for relationships within Northern Ireland; between Northern Ireland and Ireland; and throughout these islands.

On this, the 20th anniversary of that historic Belfast Agreement, the United Kingdom Government welcomes the peace and stability that has been achieved in Northern Ireland. The bilateral relationship between the United Kingdom and Ireland has never been stronger.

The 1998 Agreement and its successors have been the bedrock of political progress in Northern Ireland over the past two decades. The UK Government remains committed to working together with the Irish Government, in full accordance with the well-established three-stranded approach to Northern Ireland affairs, to ensure that the Agreement is fully protected and implemented.

This means upholding the core principles that there can be no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland without the consent of a majority of people who live there; inclusive devolved government; North-South co-operation and the strongest bilateral relationship between the UK and Ireland; and the protection of people's rights, culture and identity.

The current political impasse in Northern Ireland and the absence of a fully functioning devolved Executive and Assembly is deeply regrettable. The UK and Irish Governments remain fully committed to the restoration of devolved government at the earliest possible opportunity and will do whatever we can, in accordance with the three-stranded approach, to achieving that.

A huge amount has been achieved in Northern Ireland over the past twenty years: politically, socially, economically, and of course in respect of the security situation. There is, however, still much work to be done. Today, we take inspiration from those who took enormous risks, on all sides, to reach an accommodation twenty years ago.

The UK Government reaffirms its commitment to building a shared society in Northern Ireland that works for everyone. We also

remember those who were killed or injured during the Troubles. We also recall the sacrifice of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Armed Forces in upholding democracy and the rule of law. We will never forget the debt that we owe them.

The UK Government continues to believe that the best way we can honour them, as well as discharge our obligations to this and future generations, is through the full implementation of the Belfast Agreement, along with its successors, to achieve a stronger, more prosperous and united Northern Ireland. We want to build a Northern Ireland that is fit for the future.

[Press release: Free tyre checks at fire charity car wash](#)

In a national project being trialled in the North West, Highways England is working with fire and rescue services to offer free tyre safety checks and advice alongside a long-running programme of fire station charity car washes. As part of the pilot project, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and The Fire Fighters Charity have allowed Highways England traffic officers and other staff to run the tyre checking service at several car wash events – with the latest at Lancashire’s Fulwood fire station on Saturday (14 April).

Highways England is working to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on England’s motorways and major A roads by 40 percent by 2020 and says focusing on tyre safety will make an important contribution. The tie-up with firefighters and the established charity car wash events is seen as a friendly and informal way of reaching drivers to spread the tyre safety message.

Highways England traffic officer Neil Waring, from Knutsford outstation, checking car tyres at one of Cheshire’s charity car wash events last month

Stuart Lovatt, Highways England’s Road Safety Lead, said:

Highways England and fire and rescue services have a mutual interest in reducing the number of incidents caused by poorly-inflated or damaged tyres which could be picked up by simple and regular checks. The Fire Fighters Charity’s National Car Wash programme is now huge – involving some 20,000 vehicles across more than 600 events annually. We think it’s a great way of reaching out

to potentially thousands of drivers to check their tyres for free and give them safety advice while they wait for their cars to be washed.

The feedback from the first 2 events we've run at Frodsham and Ellesmere Port fire stations last month has been really positive and after Saturday's visit to Fulwood we'll be assessing whether we can extend the idea right across the country.

Firefighters are among the emergency service workers called out to tyre-related incidents on the motorway and major A road network while Highways England traffic officers and colleagues have to manage the congestion caused by breakdowns, punctures and road traffic collisions. Statistics show:

- there were 80,000 tyre incidents on England's network of motorways and major A roads between 2013 and 2015
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service was called out to over 4,500 vehicle incidents between 2015 and 2017
- Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service was called out to 2,866 vehicle incidents over the same period
- 27% of vehicles have at least one illegal tyre (Tyresafe 2016)
- 40% of road traffic accidents caused by vehicle defects are tyre related (DfT 2015)

Hi-tech scanners are being used to carry out the free tread and pressure checks

Tony Crook, an Area Manager at Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, said:

We attend over a thousand road traffic collisions each year and some of these could have been prevented if the vehicles involved were fitted with legal tyres.

Our firefighters see first-hand the dangers of driving poorly-maintained vehicles and we hope that this new partnership with Highways England will result in preventing crashes and even saving lives.

Watch Manager Andy Gray, a Road Safety Officer at Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service, said:

Tyre treads are designed to give good grip on wet roads. As the tread wears down the tyre loses the ability of good grip. It is essential that people regularly check their tyres. Many tyres only get checked at their yearly MOT inspection and then subsequently fail, resulting in a vehicle that could well have been driving with unsafe tyres for some time.

This partnership not only benefits people immediately with the tyre

checks but crews will show and educate them on how to check their tyres in the future. The Fire Fighters Charity also benefits from the public's kind donations from the car wash events. These are positive events where you can meet multiple partners who want to engage with you and help keep you safe on the roads.

Drivers attending Saturday's car wash event can get a free hi-tech check of their tyres from 3D tyre tread checking scanners linked to an app on a smart device. The scanners allow a quick and easy way to check tyre tread levels and provide instant feedback and advice to motorists, via a print out.

More information about the Fire Fighters Charity can be found on their [website](#).

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: Changes to the assessment economic link conditions](#)

All UK fishing licences contain a condition that requires vessels to demonstrate a genuine economic link with the UK. The economic link condition applies to landings of quota species and is assessed on a yearly basis.

From 1 May 2018 we will be changing the current assessment period of 1 April to 31 March to 01 January to 31 December (the 'calendar year'). This is to bring the assessment period in line with the yearly monitoring of quota uptake and to help those vessel owners who are required to comply with this condition to manage their quota for the year.

This change will also ensure that the English inshore fleet will benefit earlier in the year from quota donations made in fulfillment of the economic link condition. This gives the English fleet a greater opportunity to use the quota in what can be seasonal fisheries.

The way in which vessel owners must demonstrate an economic link with the UK will not be changed and are listed below by:

- landing over 50% by weight of their catch (which are subject to EU quotas) into UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man ports.
- demonstrating that at least 50% of the total crew man days at sea were accounted for by crew normally resident in UK coastal areas.
- providing proof that routine expenditure in the UK on goods and services for the vessel was equal to either: i) 50% of the value of quota stocks landed net of crew wages, or ii) 50% of the vessel's total operating expenditure for the year, net of crew wages.
- donating quota to the English under-10m fleet equivalent to a value representing 10% of the value of catch landed overseas.
- any combination of the above methods agreed by the MMO.

The change to the assessment period is not expected to affect the ability of vessel owners to comply with the economic link condition.