

# Press release: Crackdown on rogue bailiffs

- Ministers announce that they will be launching a call for evidence after concerns are raised that some bailiffs are aggressively pursuing debts
- Review of government reforms highlights the positive impact of changes but reveals lingering concerns over aggressive behaviour by minority of bailiffs.

The Government is to launch a call for evidence following concerns that a minority of bailiffs are still acting aggressively when collecting money from debtors – particularly from vulnerable people.

The call for evidence, which will be launched shortly, will look to those directly involved to share their experiences to help stop this in its tracks.

Justice Minister Lucy Frazer said:

The majority of bailiffs act professionally and within the rules, but we have been told by those working on the front line that this may not always be the case.

Aggressive tactics will not be tolerated, and through our call for evidence we will identify where the problems are and, if necessary, take action to ensure all bailiffs operate professionally and with proper respect and sensitivity.

In 2014, the government brought in new laws to protect the public from aggressive enforcement agents, while at the same time making sure that debts could still be collected fairly.

The first review of those reforms is published today (2 April), demonstrating positive progress since our changes. This includes better awareness around debtor rights and how to complain, more clarity for debtors about the fees that can be charged, the processes that should be followed, and where to go for advice.

It also found the overall effectiveness of proper enforcement has improved, with a greater proportion of debts now being successfully enforced.

Read [One year review of enforcement agent reforms](#).

However, following concerns raised by the advice sector, the call for evidence which will be launched shortly seeks to address those minority of bailiffs who continue to flout the rules and aggressively pressure vulnerable

people.

## **Notes to editors**

Debts which enforcement agents (formerly known as bailiffs) enforce include council tax arrears and unpaid debts owed to individuals and businesses.

In 2014 the Government introduced reforms to strengthen protection from rogue enforcement agents, while at the same time making sure that debts could still be collected fairly.

The reforms centred on the implementation of Part 3 and Schedule 12 of the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007. The reforms provided legal protection by introducing a comprehensive code governing, amongst other things:

- when and how enforcement agents can enter somebody's premises
- the safeguards to prevent the use of force against debtors
- what goods they can and cannot seize and, if necessary, sell
- what fees they can charge

The reforms also stopped enforcement agents entering homes when only children are present, and introduced mandatory training and a new certification process for enforcement agents.

Ministers pledged to review the impact of the reforms, and the first review is published today.

The review started in early 2015 and involved analysing a variety of data, and gathering views from key stakeholders including creditors, the advice sector, other government agencies and enforcement agents themselves.

For further information please call the Press Office 0203 334 3536.

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**[Detailed guide: Rules for farmers and land managers to prevent water](#)**

# pollution

You must take steps to prevent manure, fertiliser and soil getting into watercourses – known as diffuse water pollution (pollution).

These rules apply to farming or horticultural practices, such as:

- using and storing organic manure (manure) or manufactured fertiliser (fertiliser)
- planting and harvesting
- soil management – for example, ploughing or planting cover crops
- managing livestock on your land

Organic manures are made from one or more animal, plant or human sources. A cover crop is any crop with leaf cover that stops rain falling directly onto the soil.

These rules also apply if you:

- are in a [Nitrate Vulnerable Zone](#)
- receive funding from the [Basic Payment Scheme](#), [Countryside Stewardship](#) or [Environment Stewardship](#)

## **Assess pollution risks**

You must take into account the risks of runoff and soil erosion from these factors:

- the angle of slopes, in particular if the angle is greater than 12 degrees
- amount of ground cover
- distance to inland freshwaters, coastal waters, wetlands, springs, wells or boreholes
- soil type and condition
- presence and condition of land drains

You must identify the risks that apply to your land and your activities.

## **Before you use manure or fertiliser**

You must plan each application of manure or fertiliser on your land.

Applying includes:

- spreading on the surface of the land
- injecting into the soil
- mixing manure or fertiliser with the surface layers of soil

For all farming and horticultural land you must plan:

- how much fertiliser or manure to use, so you don't use more than your crop or soil needs
- by [assessing the pollution risks](#)
- by taking into account the weather conditions and forecasts at the time you want to apply manure or fertiliser on your land

You can use the [Nutrient Management Guide RB209](#) to work out the nutrients your soil or crop needs.

## Soil tests for cultivated agricultural land

If you're applying manure or fertiliser to cultivated agricultural land, you must also plan by using the results of soil tests.

Cultivated agricultural land is both or one of the following:

- land you've ploughed, sowed or harvested at least once in the last year
- land where you've applied organic manure or fertiliser at least once in the last 3 years

The results of soil tests must show the pH and levels of:

- nitrogen – you can use [the soil nitrogen supply assessment method \(sns\)](#) instead of a soil test
- phosphorus
- potassium
- magnesium

Soil test results must be no more than 5 years old at the time of application.

## Applying fertiliser

You must not use fertiliser:

- on waterlogged, flooded or snow covered soil
- when the soil has been frozen for more than 12 hours in the past 24 hours
- within 2 metres(m) of inland freshwaters, coastal waters, a spring, well or borehole
- where [risk factors](#) mean there's a significant risk of pollution

## Using manure

You must not use manure:

- on waterlogged, flooded or snow covered soil
- when the soil has been frozen for more than 12 hours in the past 24 hours
- within 50m of a spring, well or borehole
- within 10m of inland freshwaters or coastal waters unless you're using [precision equipment](#) or you're managing [land for specific environmental](#)

## [benefits](#)

- where [risk factors](#) mean there's a significant risk of pollution

## **6m exception for precision equipment**

You can apply manure no closer than 6m from inland freshwaters or coastal waters if you use:

- a trailing hose or shoe band spreader
- a shallow injector (no deeper than 10cm)
- a dribble bar applicator

## **Exception for environmental benefits**

There's an exception for land you manage for breeding wader birds or as a species-rich semi-natural grassland.

On this land, you can apply livestock manure (not slurry or poultry) within 10m of inland freshwaters and coastal waters if:

- the land is in an Environmental or Countryside Stewardship scheme or it's a [site of special scientific interest \(SSSI\)](#)
- you don't apply manure onto the surface of water
- you only apply the manure from 1 June to 31 October
- you apply no more than 12.5 tonnes per hectare per year

## **Reduce pollution risks**

You must take reasonable precautions to reduce the risk of pollution when you apply manure or fertiliser.

Examples include:

- checking your spreading equipment is calibrated and doesn't leak
- working manure or fertiliser into the soil within 12 hours or as soon as possible after applying it
- checking the organic matter content and moisture level in your soil – you can use the [Nutrient Management Guide RB209](#) or other resources to help you do this

## **Storing manure**

You must take into account [risk factors for runoff](#) when deciding where to store manure on your land.

You must not store it:

- within 10m of inland freshwaters or coastal waters
- within 50m of a spring, well or borehole

## Prevent erosion: manage livestock and soil

You must take reasonable precautions to prevent soil loss caused by horticultural and farming activities. Soil loss can lead to erosion and allow pollutants to get into watercourses.

Find out [how inspectors check](#) you're complying with the rules.

### Planting, harvesting and soil management

You must take reasonable precautions to reduce the risk of pollution when you carry out activities such as:

- creating farm tracks or gateways
- establishing seedbeds, polytunnels or tramlines
- cleaning out ditches
- installing drainage or irrigation
- irrigating crops
- spraying crops with pesticides, herbicides or fungicides

Examples include:

- planting crops in early autumn and in dry conditions
- planting headland rows and beds across the base of sloping land
- undersowing or sowing a cover crop to stabilise soil after harvest
- breaking up compacted soil
- establishing grass buffer strips in valleys, along contours, slopes, field edges and gateways

## Manage livestock

You must make sure you prevent livestock compacting soil by trampling it (poaching) within 5m of an inland freshwater or coastal water.

You must not place livestock feeders:

- within 10m from inland freshwaters or coastal waters
- within 50m of a spring, well or borehole
- where [risk factors](#) mean there's a significant risk of pollution

You must take reasonable precautions to prevent pollution from managing livestock.

Examples include:

- moving livestock to prevent poaching and bankside erosion – find out [how inspectors check](#) you're complying with the rules
- putting up fences to keep animals away from watercourses
- wintering livestock on well-drained, level fields

## Enforcement and inspections

The Environment Agency is responsible for enforcing these rules. It will do this through its farm inspections work. This may include checking:

- you're meeting the distance restrictions in the rules
- for soil erosion affecting a single area of more than 1 hectare
- for poaching on a stretch of land (at least 2m wide and 20m long) next to an inland freshwater or coastal water
- for signs of fertiliser use in restricted areas – including excessive growth of vegetation on the margins of restricted areas
- fertiliser records, including records you keep on calibrating fertiliser equipment
- soil test results
- for evidence of pollution or if there's a significant risk it could happen
- the types of crops you're planting

### How enforcement will work

If the Environment Agency finds you're breaching the rules, it will help you by:

- identifying the changes you need to make
- agreeing a timescale with you to make changes

To check you've made changes, the Environment Agency may:

- give you a follow-up visit
- ask for evidence, such as photographic evidence of a change

If there's already pollution or a high risk of pollution, the Environment Agency may take enforcement action. This may include prosecution.

This guide relates to The Reduction and Prevention of Agricultural Diffuse Pollution (England) Regulations 2018 which came into force on 2 April 2018.

## Get advice

Contact the [Environment Agency](#)

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## [News story: FCO Minister Burt appalled by deaths on Israel/Gaza border](#)

I am appalled by the deaths and injuries on the Israel/Gaza border on Friday (30 March). There is an urgent need to establish the facts, including why

such a volume of live fire was used and what role Hamas played in the violence. But the most important thing is to ensure that there is no repeat of what happened, with all sides committing to peaceful protest, restraint and international law.

This issue cannot just be managed over time. We need a political process to deliver a two-state solution; urgent action to improve the economic and humanitarian situation in Gaza, including easing of restrictions by Israel and Egypt; and Palestinian reconciliation based on full adherence to the Quartet principles by Hamas.

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## [News story: Scheme opens to help combat VAT evasion by non-EU online traders](#)

The central part of a package of measures to combat the abuse of VAT rules by online traders based outside the European Union (EU), The Fulfilment House Due Diligence Scheme (FHDDS), opens for registration today (1 April 2018).

Fulfilment houses that are part of this scheme will be required to perform proper due diligence on the goods they fulfil and their overseas clients.

If you run a business in the UK, such as a warehouse, that stores goods imported from outside the EU that are owned by, or on behalf of, someone established outside the EU, you will need to apply to register for the scheme.

The deadline for applications from existing fulfilment businesses is 30 June 2018, and businesses that start trading on or after today to 30 June 2018 will need to apply on or before 30 September 2018. There are penalties for late applications.

Businesses that meet the FHDDS criteria will not be allowed to trade as a fulfilment business from 1 April 2019 unless they are approved by HMRC, and risk a £10,000 penalty and a criminal conviction if they do so.

The FHDDS will help HMRC identify and combat non-compliant overseas suppliers more easily and make it more difficult for them to trade in the UK.

This will make the market fairer for the many legitimate and compliant businesses trading in the UK that pay the VAT and customs duty that they owe.

The scheme was announced by the government at Budget 2016 as part of a package of measures that will disrupt and deter abuse by some overseas businesses selling goods to UK customers through online marketplaces – HMRC



estimated that this was costing the Exchequer £1 billion to £1.5 billion of unpaid VAT a year.

Businesses that only store or fulfil goods that they own, or only store or fulfil goods that are not imported from outside the EU, are not required to register.

Transport businesses that need to store goods temporarily as part of their service, such as during an overnight break, are also not required to register.

Approved fulfilment businesses must complete due diligence checks on their overseas customers and maintain records about the goods they store from 1 April 2019.

Last month, [other measures took effect](#) that are helping to combat VAT fraud committed by online sellers.

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## [News story: Foreign Secretary's Easter message 2018](#)

I would like to send my warmest wishes to all those celebrating Easter. For Christians across the country and the globe, it is a time to gather with family and friends to reflect on the values of compassion and kindness.

Easter is also a good opportunity to recognise the fantastic contributions that Churches and faith groups make in our communities every day.

During this Easter period we also remember those who are denied their celebrations due to religious persecution and discrimination, particularly Christians in the Middle East. Such instances of religious intolerance are unacceptable and the UK continues to work hard for freedom of religion or belief for all.