

Press release: Car hire sites to provide full costs upfront after CMA action

An online travel agent, P&P Associates Ltd, and 2 operators of price comparison sites, Affordable Car Hire Ltd and Flexiblecarhire.com Ltd, have committed, under legally binding agreements, to include all compulsory charges in their car hire quotes.

This means their initial quotes must include mandatory charges like fuel surcharges, young driver fees and out-of-hours pick up charges, where applicable. They must also show all essential information including the amounts of any deposits and insurance excesses, policy on fuel charges, and what exactly the insurance covers.

All 3 businesses cooperated fully with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)'s action, which was launched after an investigation into whether certain sites were complying with consumer protection law. As a result, they have put in place arrangements to check the prices given by their car rental suppliers are fully inclusive going forwards.

The CMA's enforcement work was launched as a result of its industry-wide review of price comparison sites offering car rental, which found many were advertising very low prices to customers by not including all costs.

This left people paying more than expected at the check-out, and not having the full information required under consumer protection law about what they were paying for.

The CMA, therefore, worked with companies across the sector, resulting in significant improvements in the accuracy and clarity of information available to customers.

A year on, 30 leading websites now carry transparent prices for over 1,300 car companies in over 10,000 destinations, which means UK customers can be more confident they will not be hit by hidden charges and unexpected fees.

Michael Grenfell, CMA Executive Director for Enforcement, said:

It is important people know what they're signing up to online when hiring a car.

Prices must be transparent and include all compulsory costs so that people can find the deal that's best for them.

The CMA's work over the past year has vastly improved the sector and brought the majority of sites offering car hire in line with consumer protection law.

UK customers can now be more confident that what they see is what they will pay.

The CMA is also launching its first direct action against car hire companies based outside the UK. Following extensive complaints from people encountering hidden costs on collection of their car at the airport abroad, the CMA is now taking enforcement action against businesses based overseas but selling directly to UK customers online.

The types of problem UK consumers reported experiencing included hidden charges for fuel, surprisingly high excess amounts and hidden insurance costs.

Michael Grenfell added:

This move sends a clear message: just because a business is not on UK soil doesn't mean the law doesn't apply when it sells in the UK.

British consumers have a right to protection under consumer law and the CMA will work to ensure they receive it.

The CMA has also published advice ([link to 60SS](#)) for businesses that sell car rental to help them comply with consumer law, as well as advice for consumers on what to watch out for when [renting a car](#).

Notes for editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For CMA updates, follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#).
2. The key pieces of consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA's investigation are the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs) and Part 2 of the Consumer Rights Act 2015. The CPRs contain a general prohibition against unfair commercial practices and specific prohibitions against misleading actions, misleading omissions and aggressive commercial practices. Part 2 of the Consumer Rights Act aims to protect consumers against unfair contract terms and notices, and requires contract terms to be fair and transparent.
3. P&P Associates Limited operates the website www.weholiday.co.uk, Affordable Car Hire Limited operates the website www.affordablecarhire.com and Flexiblecarhire.com Limited operates the website <http://www.flexiblecarhire.com>.

4. This brings to an end the CMA work on car hire online intermediaries. However, it will continue to take steps to encourage and maintain compliance with consumer law in this sector. The next piece of work will focus on overseas firms selling directly to UK customers online.
 5. People looking to hire a car online can check our [consumer advice](#).
 6. The CMA has published a short summary for [car rental businesses](#).
 7. In 2017 the CMA published a market study into [digital comparison tools](#) (which includes price comparison websites).
 8. Media enquiries to the CMA should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or 0203 738 6460
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[Press release: New powers to crack down on waste crime](#)

- Environment Agency given new powers to tackle the problem of illegal waste sites.
- Powers include ability to lock up sites and force rogue operators to clean up all waste
- Body worn video cameras will be rolled out to all waste enforcement officers

New powers to tackle waste crime come into force today as the Environment Agency is given the authority to lock up illegal waste sites and block access in order to prevent tonnes of waste piling up and posing a risk to the environment.

The Environment Agency has also been granted the power to require rogue operators to clear all the waste at a problem waste site, not just the illegal waste. The changes are in response to a public consultation where 90% of respondents supported proposals for the regulator to take physical steps to curb illegal waste activity.

As the fight against waste crime ramps up, the Environment Agency has also announced that its waste enforcement officers will be equipped with body worn video cameras on their visits to waste sites. The move follows a growing number of abusive incidents during site inspections.

The measures follow an extra £30 million of funding from the Government in

November 2017 to tackle waste crime – an issue that drives business away from legitimate operators, blights communities and endangers the environment.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

These new powers will give the Environment Agency the tools they need to curb the rise of waste sites that continue to break the law and blight our communities.

Through our 25 year Environment plan we want to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it. As part of that commitment I am determined to crack down on these criminals and these new powers will be crucial in ending this criminal activity once and for all, backed up by £30 million of new money.

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, said:

These are tough new sanctions against waste criminals and their unscrupulous activity which not only drains the economy but causes harm to the environment and damages livelihoods across the country. Last year, we closed down more than two illegal waste sites a day, and we're determined to keep going.

As we step up our fight against waste criminals, we also have a duty to protect our officers who put themselves in potentially hostile situations when they visit sites for inspections or to serve notices. The introduction of the bodycams provides an added deterrent as our officers do the important job of fighting waste crime.

The use of body cameras was first trialled by the Environment Agency in the north east. Footage captured on a bodycam was recently used to bring a conviction against an offender for the first time. The defendant was found guilty of wilfully obstructing the officers in the execution of their duty and using abusive behaviour towards two officers.

Paul Whitehill, Environment Agency waste officer said:

As a former police officer, I've seen routine visits rapidly escalate into threatening, or sometimes even violent, situations. Sadly the same risks apply to the Environment Agency's officers.

We want to get on with our jobs without the threat of violence and the cameras will help to protect staff and bring obstructive individuals to justice.

In the financial year 16/17, the Environment Agency brought 138 prosecutions

against businesses or individuals for waste crime offences, yielding more than £2m in fines.

For more information on the trial of the body video cameras, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/environment-agency-trials-use-of-body-cameras>

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The responses to the 2015 public consultation on increasing EA powers are also available [online](#).

[Press release: Record numbers of low paid workers to get above inflation pay increase](#)

- National Living Wage and Minimum Wage rises on 1 April will mean real-terms pay increases for minimum wage workers.
- 2.5 million workers are set to be paid one of the minimum wage rates – up from 2 million.
- Sunday will see the largest minimum wage increases in a decade for young workers.

The National Living Wage – the statutory minimum wage for workers aged 25 and over – will increase by 4.4% to £7.83 on Sunday 1 April. This increase keeps it on track to reach 60% of median earnings by 2020. The LPC's latest projection puts the NLW at £8.62 in 2020.

Bryan Sanderson, Chair of the Low Pay Commission, said:

This new analysis shows that the minimum wage is an important force in helping those on low wages. More workers than ever before will see a real increase to their pay, as up to 2.5 million workers will benefit from these increases.

The NMW and more recently NLW have supported the earnings of the low-paid, meaning their pay has grown in real terms since the recession, while earnings higher up the distribution are yet to recover. The biggest rise in the minimum wages for 18-24 year olds for a decade will mean they benefit too.

Over the last 10 years, increases in the minimum wage have meant that workers at the bottom of the pay distribution have seen real-terms hourly pay

increases of up to 10%. Despite higher inflation over the last 18 months, this trend has continued because of large increases in the NLW. For those paid more each hour, earnings have yet to recover to pre-recession levels.

Young workers on the age-related minimum wages will also see above-inflation pay rises. The increases in the rates for 21-24 and 18-20 year olds will be the largest in a decade, rising by 4.7% and 5.4% respectively.

In total, up to 2.5 million workers (9.1% of all workers) will benefit from the minimum wage increases. 2.1 million of these will be workers aged 25 and over who are paid the NLW. Minimum wage coverage is set to top 3 million by 2020.

Coverage will rise across a range of occupations, with people working in hair and beauty most likely to be paid the minimum wage (up to 40%). The largest number of minimum wage workers will be employed in retail (475,000 in April 2018), hospitality (290,000), and cleaning and maintenance (275,000). These occupations are predicted to have coverage between 30% and 40% in 2018.

With the 2018 upratings, coverage of the minimum wage will range from 5.2% in London to 14.2% in Northern Ireland. The South East and Scotland will have coverage well below the UK average (9.1%), while in most English regions, and Wales, between 9% and 12% of workers will be paid a minimum wage rate. Full region, nation and local authority data is attached to this release.

In our [2017 Report](#), we said that most employers had successfully managed with the increased cost of the NLW since its introduction in 2016. A wider range of sectors told us that there will be concern over its affordability by 2020, though. Unions, on the other hand, thought increases would be manageable and would bring benefits to workers and the UK economy.

National Minimum Wage rates

Minimum Wage rate	Current rate (hourly)	Rate from 1 April 2018
National Living Wage	£7.50	£7.83
21-24 Year Old Rate	£7.05	£7.38
18-20 Year Old Rate	£5.60	£5.90
16-17 Year Old Rate	£4.05	£4.20
Apprentice Rate	£3.50	£3.70
Accommodation offset	£6.40	£7.00

Notes:

1. The Low Pay Commission is the independent body that advises the Government on the rates of the minimum wage, including the National Living Wage.
2. In 2017, the LPC's remit, which is set by the Government, was to recommend rates for the NLW such that it will reach 60% of median earnings by 2020, subject to sustained economic growth. For the other

rates, the LPC was asked to recommend increases to help as many low-paid workers as possible, without damaging their employment prospects.

3. All the rate increases on 1 April 2018 follow the LPC's recommendations, made in our 2017 report.
4. Rates for workers aged under 25, and apprentices, are lower than the NLW in reflection of lower average earnings and higher unemployment rates. International evidence also suggests that younger workers are more exposed to employment risks arising from the pay floor than older workers. Unlike the NLW (where some consequences for employment have been accepted by the Government), the LPC's remit requires us to set the other rates as high as possible without causing damage to jobs and hours.
5. The National Living Wage is different from the UK Living Wage and the London Living Wage. Differences include that: the UK Living Wage and the London Living Wage are voluntary pay benchmarks that employers can sign up to if they wish, not legally binding requirements; the hourly rate of the UK Living Wage and London Living Wage is based on an attempt to measure need, whereas the National Living Wage is based on a target relationship between its level and average pay; the UK Living Wage and London Living Wage apply to workers aged 18 and over, the National Living Wage to workers aged 25 and over. The Low Pay Commission has no role in the UK Living Wage or the London Living Wage.
6. The LPC recently launched its 2018 written consultation. The LPC is gathering evidence to support our recommendations for rates to apply from April 2019. [Full details are available here.](#)

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[Press release: Welsh Secretary: North Wales is a shining beacon of export success](#)

- Welsh Secretary joins International Trade Secretary at the second Board of Trade meeting in Preston to boost North Wales-Northern Powerhouse links
- Halen Mon scoop one of the first Board of Trade awards for global export success
- Bangor University students take part in first Ideas Hack programme
- Alun Cairns will also gather North Wales exporters in Wrexham to seek views on the UK Government's Export Strategy

North Wales' dynamic mix of major exporters are making a substantial contribution to Wales' global business ambitions, Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns said today as he embarks on a series of export themed visits across the north of the UK (29 March).

Mr Cairns will attend the second Board of Trade meeting in Preston this afternoon, convened to help boost exports, attract inward investors and ensure the benefits of free trade are spread equally across the country.

Presided by the Secretary of State for International Trade, Liam Fox, the Board of Trade brings together prominent figures from business and politics from each part of the UK to provide local expertise and guide the Board on trade and investment matters.

It will coincide with the presentation of the very first Board of Trade Awards, designed to recognise excellence in trade and investment across the whole of the UK.

And leading Welsh exporter Halen Môn will be among the first recipients as their business achievements at home and overseas are lauded at a Board of Trade reception this evening.

Since it began its exporting journey in 2001, Halen Môn has seized the expert support on offer from the UK Government, and now have their products stocked in over 100 British shops including M&S, Waitrose and Harvey Nichols, and can be found in over 22 countries globally.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

The UK Government wants to celebrate the achievements of businesses that are demonstrating exceptional innovation, delivering prosperity to their local communities, and championing free trade. Halen Môn are a company doing just that.

I'm delighted to see their name embossed on one of the very first Board of Trade awards handed out today.

Halen Môn's success is down to the entrepreneurship and dedication of those involved in the company. But Government has also had a part to play. From setting up meetings with buyers in markets ranging from Hong Kong to Singapore, China, Russia and Japan, to helping them navigate the necessary paperwork, we have been ready to support them on every step of their exporting journey.

North Wales' stamp on the Board of Trade meeting in Lancashire will be strengthened by students from Bangor University who will take part in the first 'Ideas Hack' – an initiative that forms part of the Department of International Trade's National Trade Academy Programme that seek to engender a culture of exporting in our future business leaders.

Working in teams, they will work to develop a new food or drink product and accompany exporting strategy to pitch to a panel of experts in a Dragon's Den style scenario.

Ahead of the meeting in Preston, Alun Cairns will seek the views of some of North and Mid Wales' most successful exporters at a meeting in Wrexham to

discuss the priorities, opportunities and challenges they face on their exporting journeys around the world.

It is part of a series of engagement opportunities undertaken by the UK Government as part of its Export Strategy review.

Exports from Wales rose by 12.3% to £16.4 billion in the latest year on year figures, and is home to nearly 4,000 exporters with an average value per exporter of more than £4.2million.

Wales is also growing in stature as a destination for inward investment, with latest figures showing that 85 foreign direct investment projects were secured in Wales last year, creating over 2,500 new jobs and safeguarding over 11,000 more.

Only last month, Toyota announced its commitment to building the next generation Auris vehicle at their plant in Derbyshire, and confirmed that the majority of the engines will be sourced from Deeside, helping to secure 3000 jobs across the two sites.

Alun Cairns added:

Export support is a key way that the UK Government can help businesses succeed and grow.

The Export Strategy review will draw on expertise from across government and the private sector, helping us to understand how best to support British companies to take advantage of opportunities in overseas markets.

Throughout this process, I want to see significant input from businesses in Wales, both large and small, to ensure we develop a strategy that meets their needs.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

Halen Môn

Situated in an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Halen Môn, the Anglesey Sea Salt Company has been making sea salt since 1997, and exporting its products since 2001 when the company joined forces with an American distributor.

Today, Halen Môn's sea salt is enjoyed across the UK it has been served at the London 2012 Olympics, a Royal Wedding and is a vital ingredient in Green and Blacks Chocolate and Piper's Crisps. The company continues to build their international reputation and currently exports to more than 15 countries.

In 2015, the company opened a new visitor centre that offers guided tours,

tasting sessions and unique insights into how their sea salt is produced. The centre is part of a new salt-cote that the company has built with support from the Welsh Government, the AONB Sustainability Fund, the Lottery Coastal Communities Fund, the Fisheries Local Action Group, and HSBC. The company has also created more than twenty jobs in the local area and supports many more through their 'local business preferred' policy of using local suppliers.

The UK Government has assisted with the paperwork required to comply with export and labelling regulations and helped them to establish meetings with potential customers in overseas markets. The company also relied on Welsh and UK Government support to apply for, and successfully obtain Protected Designation of Origin status in 2014, which supports the company's exporting strategy in Europe and beyond.

Board of Trade

Alun Cairns is joined on the Board of Trade by two expert business advisers from Wales, Lord Rowe Beddoe and Heather Stephens.

Lord Rowe Beddoe has a distinguished international business career and brings with him decades of experience gathered during his years as Chairman of the Welsh Development Agency and Cardiff Airport.

Heather Stephens was part of the small team which launched the insurance group Admiral in 1993 in Cardiff. Since its launch Admiral has grown to become one of the largest private sector employers in Wales with a turnover of more than £2bn. She is also currently the chair and founding member of The Waterloo Foundation, a charity aiming to give grants to companies in the UK & worldwide.

Membership of the Board of Trade is restricted to Privy Councillors.

The only member is

(i) Secretary of State for Department for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade (Chair)

Advisers to the Board

(i) Secretary of State for Scotland

(ii) Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

(iii) Secretary of State for Wales

England (6)

(i) Patricia Hewitt – outgoing Chair of UK India Business Council

(ii) Andrew Mills – CEO Virtualstock

(iii) Collette Roche – Chief of Staff, Manchester Airport

(iv) Marnie Millard – CEO Nichols PLC

(v) Iqbal Ahmed – Chairman, Chief Executive and Founder of Seamark Group

(vi) Edward Timpson – former Minister of State for Children and Families

Scotland (2)

(vii) Brian Wilson – former Trade Minister

(viii) Ian Curle – CEO of Edrington Group

Wales (2)

(ix) Lord Rowe-Beddoe – former Chair of Welsh Development Agency

(x) Heather Stevens – Chair and founding member of The Waterloo Foundation

Northern Ireland (1)

(xi) Mark Nodder (CEO of Wrights Group)