

## [National Statistics: Pesticide usage survey: soft fruit in the United Kingdom, 2016](#)

Data on pesticide usage during the 2015 to 2016 growing season on soft fruit crops.

This report is published on the Health and Safety Executive website.

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## [News story: Sellafield's 'locked vault' is ready to be emptied](#)

The holes will allow radioactive waste to be removed from one of the site's most hazardous buildings.

Six giant steel doors now provide a safe barrier between the outside world and the waste inside the silo, until it starts to be removed by a 'grabbing' machine.

### [Sellafield's 'locked vault' is ready to be emptied](#)

The Pile Fuel Cladding Silo was built in the 1950s when the site's purpose was to make material for nuclear weapons.

Safely decommissioning the building is one of the highest priorities for Sellafield Ltd and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

Getting access to the waste inside has been one of the most complex engineering challenges in the site's history.

Head of the PFCS programme Steven Carroll said:

It's an early Christmas present to complete the work three months early and under budget. We can now say 'the silo is ready for retrievals' for the first ever time.

Getting access to this nuclear waste store which was built with no thought to how it would be emptied has been an incredible engineering challenge, involving years of planning and preparation, hundreds of dedicated people and many millions pounds of investment.

It's also involved a massive team effort with our main contractor partner Bechtel Cavendish Nuclear Solutions and businesses such as James Fisher Nuclear and Shepley Engineers.

Reaching this landmark allows us to fully focus next year on manufacturing and installing all of the equipment which will reach in, retrieve the waste and allow it to be safely exported to the new facility for safer storage.

The level of challenge involved with this facility is unparalleled, considering the age of the building, the lack of historical information about the waste itself, the atmosphere inside the silo and its position on one of the most congested sites, anywhere in the world.

Each section of concrete has been cut away in a single piece (known as the monolith) and withdrawn into a containment bag. Six containment doors (already installed on all compartments) is then lowered over the apertures and closed.

To remove the waste, a crane will extend through the cut holes, a grabber will then drop down to scoop the waste up, lifting it out of the container and back through the hole.

It will then be dropped into a specially-designed metal box, for safe and secure storage in a modern facility.

As the first ever breaking of the structure since it was built, this takes Europe's most complex nuclear site a step closer to reducing the UK's nuclear hazard.

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## **[Press release: Government launches plan to increase participation in democracy](#)**

The government has launched the first ever [Democratic Engagement Plan](#) today (19 December 2017) to tackle democratic exclusion and outline how it will increase participation among under registered groups.

The Minister for the Constitution Chris Skidmore launched the Plan today at the first meeting of the National Democracy Week Council, made up of organisations from across the civil society sector, working in partnership with government.

The Council has been established to plan activities for a week of unified national action that will take place between 2 to 6 July next year in

celebration of two significant anniversaries – 100 years since women won the right to vote and 90 years since women won equal voting rights to men.

The Democratic Engagement Plan, launched today, follows the ‘Every Voice Matters’ tour, which over the last year has visited every region and nation in Great Britain. The Minister met over 100 organisations that represent people who are underrepresented on the electoral register, gathering insight on the barriers these groups face engaging with the democratic process.

The Plan sets out our approach to creating an inclusive democracy by:

- building on record levels of voter registration and identifying where there is more to do
- further encouraging participation to make our democracy more inclusive than ever
- launching National Democracy Week to promote democratic engagement
- identifying the barriers faced by specific groups that are currently under-represented on the electoral register

Also, today is the next stage of the government’s plans to make changes to anonymous registration, making it more accessible for those who need it most. The draft legislation will be laid in Parliament, if it is approved we anticipate the changes will come into force in time for the May local elections in England.

Minister for the Constitution, Chris Skidmore said:

I am pleased to publish the first Democratic Engagement Plan which sets out our longer-term approach to encouraging democratic participation.

We now have a better understanding of how participation differs between different groups and areas and this plan sets out how best we can engage with those who are under-registered so ours is a democracy that works for everyone.

We want to ensure that everyone eligible who wishes to register to vote and participate in our democracy is given the opportunity to do so. There are still millions of people who are not enrolled on the electoral register or choose not to vote. But as this Plan shows, in our democracy, every voice matters.

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[\*\*News story: Home Secretary’s open\*\*](#)

# Letter to EU citizens in the UK

I'm proud that so many EU citizens like yourself have built your lives in the UK and made it your home. We value your contribution which is why the government put safeguarding your rights as the first priority in the Brexit negotiations.

I am absolutely delighted that we have now reached an agreement with the EU that does this. I know that at times you've had an anxious wait while the fine details were ironed out, but we wanted to get it right and we have always had you at the forefront of our thoughts.

We have always said that we will continue to recognise the value you bring to our society, and that we will remain an open and diverse country. Hopefully this deal provides reassurance that we will do just that.

The agreement we have reached ensures the rights you and your family currently have remain broadly the same with access to healthcare, benefits and pensions protected. And your existing close family members living outside the UK retain the right to join you in future. These rights will be cemented in UK law meaning you can live your life as you do now with the security of knowing they won't change. Irish citizens also have their existing rights, associated with the Common Travel Area arrangements, protected.

Away from the negotiations, my team at the Home Office has been working hard to build the digital system that you'll use to get your new status. It's being designed from scratch to be quick and simple to use. There won't be bureaucratic hurdles – those processing applications will work in your favour.

What's more, it will cost no more than the fee a British person pays for a passport and if you already have valid permanent residence documentation it will be free. There will be support for the vulnerable and those without access to a computer, and we're working with EU citizens' representatives and embassies to ensure the system works for everyone.

You do not need to do anything just yet. You will see more detail about the settled status scheme from us in the new year and we expect applications will open during the second half of 2018. In the meantime, please do share this message with your friends and family so that they too can stay up to date through [our mailing list](#).

I hope that the agreement we have reached provides certainty to you and your family ahead of Christmas. EU citizens, like yourself, who have made the UK their home are our family, our neighbours and our colleagues and we want you to stay.

[Further guidance for EU citizens in the UK is available on GOV.UK.](#)

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## Press release: Justice Secretary pledges commitment to tackling racial inequality in the Criminal Justice System

The Lammy review, published in October, found evidence that people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds have a worse experience of the CJS. David Lammy's findings included striking statistics which show starkly the work that will be required to address this deep-rooted problem – this includes the fact that BAME men and women represent 25% of prisoners, despite making up just 14% of the population.

David Lammy made a range of recommendations, including that data should be published and analysed regularly on ethnicity and the CJS, and that deferred prosecution models should be explored further.

The Justice Secretary today pledged to take forward work around each of the 35 recommendations – making clear that action had been taken on several already – and went even further by challenging all parts of the criminal justice system to seek out further opportunities to challenge race bias.

While some of the changes will take longer to achieve than others, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has already made progress on several recommendations. For example, prison governors have been asked to immediately implement the recommendation to establish a diverse forum in prisons to review the use of force. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Justice has met several recommendations by publishing data that has never been compiled or released before on race bias in the CJS. This includes a breakdown by ethnicity of parole board hearing outcomes and the educational background of offenders, linking with data held by the Department for Education – and the MoJ will take every opportunity to keep adding new data.

Today's response builds on the work already announced by the Prime Minister earlier this year when she published the Race Disparity Audit. The Prime Minister challenged society to "explain or change" the disparities which were uncovered.

Academics, campaigners and think-tanks will have an open invitation to scrutinise data on race bias. Where the MoJ cannot explain discrepancies in the way different groups are treated – it will make reforms to address them.

Where a recommendation in the Lammy review cannot be implemented in full or exactly as recommended, further work will be carried out and an alternative approach will be found that achieves the same aim.

The Ministry of Justice also committed to doing everything possible to encourage and support other organisations to take action to meet their specific recommendations.

Justice Secretary David Lidington said:

This Government is committed to exposing injustice wherever it exists. Where we cannot explain differences in outcomes for different groups, we will reform.

Effective justice simply cannot be delivered unless everyone has full confidence in our Criminal Justice System.

This is the very first step in a change of attitude towards race disparity that will touch on every part of the criminal justice system for years to come.

Ministers have also started discussions with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime about piloting a deferred prosecution scheme in the capital.

Work will be driven forward by a new Race and Ethnicity Board, made up of the key partners in the CJS responsible for implementing the Lammy recommendations. The Board will work with external stakeholders to inform and encourage challenge on its progress. Extensive publication of data will ensure the Ministry of Justice and partners across the CJS are held to account for reducing race bias.

**Notes to Editors:**

- The Government's response to David Lammy will be published on the Ministry of Justice web page on Gov.UK at 9.30am on Tuesday 19 December.
- The Government's 'Ethnicity Facts and Figures' website can be found at <http://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk>