

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, at the Legislative Council Complex after the passing of the Medical Registration (Amendment) Bill 2017 today (March 28):

Reporter: (about the passing of the Medical Registration (Amendment) Bill 2017)

Secretary for Food and Health: First of all, I would like to thank everybody who have participated in getting the law passed – the legislators, patients, families and doctors' associations – in working together to reach this consensus. Now that the legislation was passed, we have a number of follow-up work. First of all, with the increased number of lay members (of the Medical Council of Hong Kong), we are going to have negative vetting legislation tabled to the Legislative Council, so that we can lay out all the guidelines and the legislation related to the election of representatives from patients rights organisations. Secondly, on doctors with limited registration, we have increased the number of years of registration from not more than one year to not more than three years. With this increase, we hope to increase the flexibility of our public health system. The Hospital Authority, the Department of Health, and the two medical schools in Hong Kong can provide further incentives to hire overseas trained doctors to come back to Hong Kong to work, so that the situation of doctor shortage can be relieved. Finally, we also have to improve the patient's complaint system to increase its efficiency and effectiveness. The Medical Council of Hong Kong would have to forge ahead with the work in terms of improving the existing mechanism. The Government would also provide additional resources to assist with the administration to forge ahead with this kind of work. Finally, I would like to thank everybody who have participated in getting this legislation passed. I think it is really a very important step forward to improve the relationship between doctors and patients so that we – the Government, doctors, patients and patients right associations – can work together to improve the health of the people in Hong Kong.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

Press release: Easter crackdown on illegal fishing

They'll be out in force patrolling waters throughout the North East to make

sure anglers are fishing in the right place, with the right tackle and equipment, and with a valid licence.

Easter and the upcoming Bank Holiday weekends are always popular for angling, and despite the unsettled weather forecast, there's no better time to get outdoors and enjoy some of the great fishing spots in the North East.

The Easter enforcement activity will be supported by the Angling Trust's Operation Clampdown – the annual blitz on illegal coarse fishing during the close season, which runs from 15 March to 15 June inclusive.

There are currently 464 Angling Trust Voluntary Bailiffs in England who are taking part in Operation Clampdown by keeping watch on their local rivers and reporting suspicious activity to the Environment Agency and police. There are 79 Voluntary Bailiffs in the North East and Yorkshire area.

Targeting known hotspots

Kevin Summerson, Fisheries Enforcement Technical Specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

The Environment Agency carries out enforcement work all year round. Our job is to protect fish stocks and improve fisheries, and anglers who fish legally rightly demand we take action to catch those who flout the law.

Our enforcement officers, working together with the police and supported by Angling Trust Voluntary Bailiffs, will be targeting illegal fishing this Easter weekend and anyone caught can expect to face prosecution.

Our work is intelligence-led, meaning we target known hotspots and act on reports of illegal fishing.

Looking for those flouting the law

During January alone the Environment Agency prosecuted 14 men in the North East for fishing without a rod licence, resulting in fines amounting to £3,749 and costs totalling £1,784. Kevin added:

This demonstrates just how seriously we take these offences. Whether it's fishing for coarse fish during close season, using illegal nets and other equipment, or fishing without a licence, our officers will be looking for those flouting the law. We urge people to help us protect the health of our fisheries by reporting suspected illegal fishing to us.

Anglers are reminded it is currently the close season for coarse fishing. This means fishing for coarse fish on rivers and streams is not permitted.

This is done to help protect breeding fish, helping to safeguard stocks for the future. However, there are still plenty of places anglers can wet a line for coarse fish, including most stillwaters and canals.

You can check local fishing byelaws on [the gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk)

People are urged to report illegal fishing to the Environment Agency's incident hotline on 0800 807060, or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

The rod licence is great value for money – a full annual licence costs just £30 with some short term and concessionary licences also available. [Buy your rod licence online.](#)

Consultation on a Deposit Return Scheme

UK consumers use an estimated 13 billion plastic drinks bottles a year. Three billion are incinerated, sent to landfill or left to pollute our streets, countryside and marine environment.

Today the Government has announced that a deposit return scheme to increase recycling rates and reduce the amount of waste pollution will be introduced subject to consultation later this year.

Options for a deposit return scheme will be considered alongside other policies to improve recycling rates. The Government will only take forward options from the consultation which demonstrate that they offer clear benefits and are resistant to fraud, and that costs on businesses, consumers and the taxpayer are proportionate.

The consultation will take into account views from producers, suppliers and consumers to ensure that any system introduced works across the country.

I would be interested to hear from constituents. Is this a good idea? Which scheme would work best?

News story: Simpler Internal Dispute

Resolution Procedures for the AFPS

MOD's Veterans UK organisation, part of Defence Business Services, have taken steps to simplify the Armed Forces Pension Schemes complaints process, known as the Internal Dispute Resolution Procedures.

Veterans UK have listened to and taken on board the advice from The Pensions Ombudsman that the complaints process should be accessible, simple and streamlined with the aim of achieving the right outcome at the earliest opportunity. Sharing that view Veterans UK have shortened the overall process so that they can provide a decision in a quicker timeframe. This change will come into effect from 01 April 2018.

The Pension Regulator expects that a decision will be made on a dispute within four months of receiving an application. The streamlined single stage IDR process will reduce this further, with Veterans UK operating a 60 working days timeline after investigations concluded that this could reduce the time taken to process a complaint by 25%.

Any member of the AFPS has the right to raise a complaint using the IDR process if they disagree with a decision or action taken by the scheme administrator. The single stage process will look at all aspects of the complaint along with any additional evidence or information provided. For detailed guidance and Frequently Asked Questions on the process an [Internal Dispute Resolution Procedures factsheet](#) (PDF, 110KB, 4 pages)

is available.

Elizabeth Phelan, Assistant Head of Veterans Pensions at Veterans UK, said:

At Veterans UK we strive to deliver the best service we can to all our customers so please remember that we will make every effort to resolve any disputes before turning to the IDR process. However, we are confident that by moving to a more accessible and streamlined complaints process our commitment to excellent levels of customer service can be maintained and strengthened. Veterans UK are constantly looking at ways to improve the Customer Experience.

Press release: Hefty fines for

unlicensed anglers

Two men have been handed hefty court fines for fishing illegally in separate offences at Manor Farm Lakes Northill, Bedford.

They were caught in May last year fishing without a rod licence during targeted patrols by Environment Agency fisheries enforcement officers.

Jay John Whitbread, 22, of Church Lane, Bedford, was caught fishing without a licence at the same location on 2 separate occasions and both cases were heard together at court. He was fined £657, and ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £30 and £127 costs. A total of £814.

Liam Knight, 27, of Westmill Lane, Hitchin, was also caught fishing without a licence. He was fined £293, and ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £30 and £127 costs. A total of £450.

The defendants both pleaded guilty to Luton Magistrates Court on 6 March 2018.

After the hearing Environment Agency officer Kye Jerrom said:

It's a crime to fish without a valid licence and offenders could be fined up to £2,500, have their fishing equipment seized and be banned from fishing. Our enforcement officers inspect rod licences throughout East Anglia and could turn up at any time.

All income from rod licence sales is invested directly back into maintaining and improving fisheries. Those who fish without a rod licence are having a direct effect on that work and are selling other anglers short. At £30 for a 2 rod coarse and non-migratory trout license, or £82 to also fish for salmon and sea trout, and short term options available too, the rod licence is great value for money".

Anglers are being reminded that fishing for coarse fish in rivers is off limits until 16 June and anyone caught can expect to be prosecuted and face a fine. The 3-month break began 15 March and ends 15 June.

Close Season

The close season on rivers is important to maintain healthy fish stocks, as it allows fish time to breed as well as giving other waterside wildlife the same break. During this time fisheries enforcement officers will be carrying out regular patrols of rivers with partners under OPERATION CLAMPDOWN.

OPERATION CLAMPDOWN is a joint Environment Agency, Police and Angling Trust – Voluntary Bailiff Service enforcement strategy run throughout the closed season. It ensures reactive and planned enforcement activity prevents illegal fishing on lakes, rivers, ponds and canals where coarse fishing is allowed.

Officers will be ensuring all anglers have a valid rod licence, and they will also be on the look-out for those using illegal baits, banned methods of fishing and fishing in prohibited areas.

Buying a rod licence is quick and easy – either online at www.gov.uk – the only site you need, or from the Post Office.

The Environment Agency urges anyone to report illegal fishing by calling 0800 80 70 60.