

Ofcom's proposal to cut landline prices by at least £5 is a step in the right direction – Watson

Tom Watson, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, commenting on Ofcom's review of standalone landline costs, said

"It's a scandal that service providers have increased landline prices year on year despite benefiting from significant decreases in wholesale costs so Ofcom's proposal to cut landline prices by at least £5 is a step in the right direction.

"Landlines are important to households across the country, and the elderly and vulnerable in particular. We need to see a fairer deal for consumers and the Government must act to put safeguards in place to prevent future increases above inflation.

"This landline rip-off can't go on any longer."

China's large lakes face water shortages

Two of China's largest lakes along the Yangtze River, the Poyang and Dongting, face extreme water shortages, local authorities and environment observers have said.

Last year, Poyang, China's largest freshwater lake, entered its low season 54 days earlier than in previous years. By Tuesday, the water level at Xingzi station was 8.37 meters, 2 meters lower than the average in the low season.

The overall water area of the Poyang Lake is currently 351 square kilometers, about one-fourth of what it is in flood season, according to the local water resources department.

The Dongting Lake in Hunan Province is also drying out. The drinking water supply of residents and local animals is also under threat.

Hu Zhenpeng, director of the Jiangxi provincial ecological civilization association, said aquatic vegetation on the Poyang Lake had reduced by 400 square kilometers and many animals had died due to the drought.

"As the lake beds are exposed, lake species such as the Yangtze dolphin have

an even smaller space to live in," Hu said.

"I did not catch much big fish for the whole of the winter," said Zhang Donggun, a 57-year-old farmer in Lushan City, Jiangxi Province.

"Usually fish lay eggs in the Yangtze, and around the beginning of April they come to the Poyang Lake to grow. But if water levels are too low, they do not have room to grow," he said.

Facing stark water shortages around the two lakes, farmers have had to switch from a double crop rice to a single crop breed.

There have been proposals to establish sluice gates to regulate water for the two lakes, but experts have warned that gates could create more problems than they could solve.

"The management of the two lakes could impact the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River and even impact the economic and social development of the whole country," said Chen Jin, an expert with the Yangtze River Research Institute.

"Waste water discharged into the lake area must be controlled, and the efficiency of water use needs to be improved," he said.

Green Party: Budget cuts and Brexit combined could bring UK to its knees



Green Party

28 February 2017

The Green Party has responded to news Government departments will face yet more cuts [1].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

"The Government is already asking its departments to do the impossible, with demands they do more with less, which is stretching the country to breaking point. By forcing through yet more cuts the Government is creating an ever increasing downward spiral, exacerbating need but removing the means to deal

with it.

“The Conservatives are already punishing local authorities for its Government’s own failure, with the crisis facing social care just one example of the damaging impact its budget slashing is having on people who need help and support the most.

“Add into this mix the demands of Brexit and it is almost impossible to see how the country will not be brought to its knees.”

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[Xi stresses stability, progress in China’s economic work](#)

China will stick to the basic tone of “seeking progress while maintaining stability” in this year’s economic work to ensure stable and healthy development, Chinese President Xi Jinping said Tuesday.

“China will strive to improve the quality and efficiency of the economy and deepen supply-side structural reform,” Xi said at a meeting of the Central Leading Group on Finance and Economic Affairs.

It was the 15th conference of the leading group, which is headed by Xi. Premier Li Keqiang, the deputy head, also attended the meeting.

The country’s economic regulators reported their work plans in excess capacity cutting, financial risk control, property market regulation and the revival of the manufacturing sector.

After hearing the reports, Xi highlighted the handling of loss-making “zombie companies” in excess capacity cutting.

“The government should make more efforts to guarantee subsistence allowance and re-employment for those laid-off, and grab effective methods to dissolve corporate debts and prevent moral hazard,” Xi said. “China will accelerate building a supervision coordination mechanism and strengthen macro-prudential regulation to prevent systemic risks.”

He also pointed out the role that financial supervision could play in improving the economy.

“Financial supervisors should fix weak links and act hard against illegal

activities," he said, calling for reform and innovation to help the financial sector better serve the real economy.

"Houses are built to be lived in, not for speculation," Xi said, when making instructions on house market regulation.

"A long-term mechanism will be established to ensure market stability, with improved policies to stabilize home buying, guide market expectations and enhance land supply systems," Xi said.

Xi stressed quality in reviving the manufacturing sector, saying the sector should shift from the expansion of quantity to the improvement of quality.

"China will channel more energy into reducing prices and administrative fees in monopolized sectors, and strive to lower business burdens," Xi added.

During the meeting, policymakers discussed the work report of the leading group, which has rolled out more than 400 measures to improve economic regulation since 2012.

[News story: Worm bait returns for trial period at Exmoor fishery](#)

The Environment Agency is continuing conservation measures on its Watersmeet and Glenthorne Fishery for the coming season.

Restrictions have been in place on this popular Exmoor fishery since 2014 in response to disease problems affecting adult salmon and sea trout returning to the East Lyn to spawn. Recent monitoring also revealed reduced numbers of young salmon.

Anglers have been allowed to continue fishing for salmon and sea trout on a 'catch and release' basis throughout the season and have been limited to fishing with a fly or spinner only. The use of worms was traditionally allowed from 16 June. However, this method of fishing can be very effective and has been prohibited in recent years to limit the number of fish caught while stocks have been under pressure.

Following discussions with the Lyn Riparian Owners Association and local interest groups, worming is being allowed again on a trial basis this year from 16 June, subject to strict conditions.

Worms will only be allowed when fished on a single circle-patterned hook, no larger than Size 4. A circle hook increases the likelihood a fish is hooked in the jaw where it can be safely removed. This type of hook reduces the risk of 'deep hooking' which can sometimes occur when worming. It also reduces the

chances of accidentally catching trout and salmon parr on this method.

All salmon and sea trout must still be released throughout the 2017 season, irrespective of the method used to catch them. As a further conservation measure, anglers will not be allowed to fish with worm at any time in Long Pool.

Mike Holland of the Environment Agency said:

We want fishermen to continue to enjoy their sport on the Watersmeet and Glenthorne Fishery, but at the same time ensure suitable measures are in place to safeguard migratory fish returning to the river to spawn.

By allowing only circle hooks to be used for worming we hope to maximise the survival chances of any salmon and sea trout caught and released by this method. We'll review the success of this trial at the end of the season.

The brown trout fishery regulations remain unchanged. The full list of fishery regulations can be found printed on the reverse of the permits, purchasable from local agents.