

News story: National Drought Group – Chairman's statement

The National Drought Group (NDG), chaired by the Environment Agency's Chief Executive, brings together government departments, water companies, environmental groups and others to coordinate action to maintain water supplies and manage the other risks associated with drought. The NDG convened today (Monday 23 July) to assess the present situation and coordinate plans for the weeks ahead.

The present situation and the prospects

We are in a continuing period of prolonged hot and dry weather. June 2018 was the driest June since 1925, with a rainfall total for England of only 15 mm.

One water company, United Utilities, has announced its intention to impose a hosepipe ban ("Temporary Use Ban") in parts of the North West from 5 August. The other water companies do not currently intend to introduce hosepipe bans, and there is no threat to essential public water supplies. But continued dry weather into autumn could see the risk of some further restrictions and further environmental impacts across the country.

Action we are taking

The water companies, the Environment Agency and others are taking action to reduce the risk of further water restrictions and to ensure that water users and the environment itself continue to get the water they need. Participants agreed to step up their activity on all fronts.

Water companies

The water companies are stepping up action to sustain a reliable water supply to their customers. They:

- Have put additional resources in place to do so.
- Are implementing their contingency drought plans as appropriate.
- Are actively advising customers on water efficiency and offering free water saving devices.
- Are stepping up their efforts to find and fix leaks to protect supplies and help reduce the risk of further hosepipe bans
- Are taking a range of other steps to sustain supply, including water trading between companies and additional measures to keep farmers and other customers supplied with a particular focus on vulnerable customers.

The Environment Agency is:

- Actively monitoring the weather, water situation and the environment, analysing the prospects and sharing its analysis with others.
- Working with the water companies to ensure they are following their

drought plans and implementing actions in a timely way.

- Working with businesses, farmers and others who abstract water under licence from the EA to manage down demand and protect the environment, using its regulatory powers as necessary.
- Stepping up engagement to encourage the public and others to cut down on non-essential water use.
- Operating water transfers such as the Shropshire Groundwater Scheme to help maintain river flows for water supply and the environment.
- Stepping up its incident response to ensure the environment is protected – responding to 50% more hot weather incidents, including fish kills.
- Moving its operations to higher alert status and increasing staff resources to support its own work and those of partners in affected areas.
- Leading by example: EA fleet vehicles and office windows will not be cleaned to avoid unnecessary water usage.

Other partners

- The National Farmers Union (NFU) and farmers are working closely with the EA, Internal Drainage Boards, water companies and Defra to manage the situation and sustain farming production, including through water trading and abstraction restrictions that are now in place in some catchments.
- The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) have produced top tips for farmers on coping with drought and heat.
- The Canal and Rivers Trust (CRT) are closing some navigations to save water, providing information to boat users on the situation and asking them to consider sharing locks where possible – as they always do in summer.
- The Angling Trust have distributed guidance to their members on fishery management during hot and dry weather. Anglers can report any fish in distress to the Environment Agency hotline on 0800 80 70 60.
- Other partners are taking action to preserve water supplies, sustain economic and leisure activity and protect as far as possible the environment, rivers, lakes and wildlife.

Advice to the public

Please use water wisely. Prolonged dry weather and localised drought is not unusual. Water companies plan for periods of exceptionally low rainfall. There is enough water for all if water resources are managed properly. All of us can play a role. We encourage everyone to follow the advice of their water company and use water wisely. This will help protect the environment and the economy, and reduce the risk of further water restrictions.

Enhanced coordination and next NDG meeting

The NDG agreed to step up coordination between its members to maintain a common assessment of the situation and ensure the closest possible cooperation to address the current challenges; and agreed to meet again on 29 August.

[Press release: Environmental permits issued for Holmwood drilling site](#)

The Environment Agency has issued environmental permits to the company to provide a high level of protection to the environment during its operations at the Holmwood site in Dorking, Surrey.

Before issuing the permits the Environment Agency carried out a detailed assessment of the application and considered all legal requirements, along with all comments received through two rounds of public consultation. The environmental permits issued set out the stringent conditions the site operator must comply with to ensure that the environment and local people are protected.

Europa Oil & Gas Limited will need to have all relevant permissions in place from other regulatory partners before it can start operations on site.

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

We would like to thank everyone who responded to the public consultations. We have carefully considered all of the information received and are confident, in issuing these permits, that we have the right controls in place to ensure operations are carried out safely.

The Environment Agency plays a key role in protecting the environment. We take an evidence based approach to regulation and had to be satisfied that the necessary protections were in place before we would allow exploration to begin. We are confident that the legally binding conditions in the permits and our compliance checks will ensure that operations meet the highest standards.

We do understand the concerns that a large number of people have raised and we are committed to keeping local people informed of our work to regulate the site.

[View the oil and gas mining waste permit issued for Holmwood Wellsite, Surrey.](#)

Notes to editors

The permits authorise Europa Oil & Gas Limited to:

- drill a new oil well at Holmwood
- store oil on-site
- manage any radioactive waste arising from these activities (a separate

permit has been issued in this respect)

There is further information on how the Environment Agency determines applications, the time scales involved and how it regulates onshore oil and gas:

- [Environmental permitting: public participation statement](#)
- [Onshore oil and gas exploration and extraction: environmental permits](#)
- [Onshore oil and gas regulation – information page](#)

And information on radioactive waste permits:

- [Radioactive substances for non-nuclear sites](#)

[Corporate report: Management of radioactive waste and materials inventory data](#)

The [UK Radioactive Waste and Materials Inventory \(UK Inventory\)](#) provides comprehensive information on a wide range of radioactive waste and material produced by organisations in various sectors including energy, medical, research, industrial and defence.

These producers are responsible for managing information about the nature and quantities of their inventories, as well as contributing data to a central collection that is updated every 3 years. This process is managed by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), and funded jointly with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The contract for the 2019 Inventory compilation and reporting is currently out to tender via the RWM Special Nuclear Services Framework Lot 3.

This approach seeks to review the NDA's strategy to collecting and compiling inventory data, considering whether a different approach for managing the UK Inventory could have a positive impact across the sector.

Different options are being reviewed following developments in recent years that include:

- the requirement to ensure the UK complies with international reporting obligations for spent fuels and nuclear materials
- the establishment of a national inventory forum that brings UK practitioners together to share learning
- introduction of new data management systems across Magnox and LLWR
- the EU referendum
- updated information on international inventory management practices

This paper identifies credible options, outlines how these were assessed and proposes a preferred option.

Please submit comments by 31 August to strategy@nda.gov.uk

Notice: RH5 6HN, Europa Oil and Gas Limited: environmental permit issued

Updated: The RSR standard rules set relevant to this permit has been added to the attachments.

The Environment Agency publish oil and gas mining waste permits.

This decision includes the permit, decision document and standard rules set for:

- Operator name: Europa Oil and Gas Limited
 - Facility name: Holmwood Wellsite
 - Permit number: EPR/YP3735YK/A001
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News story: More efficient, high-quality buildings: apply for funding

UK organisations can apply for a share of up to £12.5 million for projects to transform how the construction sector delivers new buildings.

The funding is provided by [UK Research and Innovation](#) and delivered through Innovate UK.

The need to transform

There is a shortage of high-quality housing in the UK and we need more affordable, energy-efficient and healthier places to live and work. This is creating demand to produce buildings more quickly, safely and with lower emissions.

For this to happen there has to be a revolution in the construction sector. Currently it lags behind other industries for productivity – and hasn't changed much in more than 40 years.

So through the [Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund](#) government is supporting a transformation of UK construction.

[Find opportunities for business and research to transform construction.](#)

The £170 million government investment, matched by £250 million from industry, will create new construction processes and techniques for building manufacture.

This £12.5 million funding competition is one element of the programme, which also includes funding for research, a new construction network and the creation of an active building centre and innovation hub.

It is a core part of the [Construction Sector Deal](#), which sets out its vision for a future-proofed sector that can provide affordable, energy efficient homes in days or weeks, rather than months, and at a third of the cost.

[Find out more about the Industry Sector Deals](#) and how they're supporting [the modern Industrial Strategy](#).

Tackling the construction lifecycle

We are looking for projects that address the 3 main stages of the construction lifecycle. Specifically, they should focus on how we:

- design and manage buildings, such as using digitally-enabled performance management systems
- construct high-quality buildings, taking a manufacturing approach
- power those buildings, for example, through the use of active energy components

The idea proposed should ultimately lead to cost savings, reduced delays and improvements in collaborations, productivity and outputs.

Delivering the modern Industrial Strategy

To meet the objectives of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, projects must do one or more of the following:

- encourage the adoption of design approaches that favour pre-manufacturing and assembly
- increase productivity on construction projects
- develop scalable methods to speed up construction and provide greater certainty over budget and time
- develop integrated building components that generate, manage and store energy at lower costs
- reduce the construction and whole-life costs of built assets
- improve the whole-life value and safety of built assets, while reducing

the carbon impact of that asset

Depending on the length, projects can be for feasibility studies, industrial research or experimental development.

Competition information

- this competition opens on 23 July 2018, and the deadline for applications is midday on 19 September 2018
- a UK business must lead the project, working with other businesses, research, public sector or third sector organisations. At least one SME must be involved
- total project costs can be between £25,000 and £500,000 for projects that last 6 to 12 months, or between £250,000 and £1 million if they last 12 to 24 months
- you could attract up to 70% of your project costs
- projects must start by December 2018
- as part of the competition you can attend a briefing event, where you'll find out more about how to create and submit a quality application.

Register for:

- [London](#) or [an online webinar](#) on 23 July 2018
- [Bristol](#) on 24 July 2018
- [Birmingham](#) on 25 July 2018

[Find out more about this competition and apply.](#)