

# Press release: Abstraction reform: further moves made towards Green Brexit

Access to clean and safe water supplies is essential for people and the environment, however increasing demand for water is putting pressure on supplies.

Latest data shows that five per cent of surface water bodies and 15 per cent of groundwater bodies are at risk from increasing water use by current abstraction licence holders that could damage the environment.

Today's new [abstraction reform plan](#) will improve better access to water by:

- Preventing unsustainable abstraction by reviewing existing licences and introducing more controls to protect rivers, lakes and groundwater.
- Developing a strong focus on catchment areas for water bodies to encourage more partnership working between [the Environment Agency](#), abstractors and catchment groups to protect and enhance the environment and improve access to water.
- Modernising the abstraction service to allow online applications for licences and bring water resources regulations in line with other environmental permitting regulations.

Environment Minister, Thérèse Coffey said:

The abstraction licencing system is in clear need of reform and I am very pleased to set out how we will do this in our plan. I believe our approach will work for all parties and, most importantly, will protect our precious water supplies.

Our ambition is to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it and we will keep building on our successes by enhancing our environmental standards and delivering a Green Brexit.

Making sure that abstraction is sustainable and contributes to healthy water bodies that are able to provide good support to fish and other aquatic life is at the heart of these plans.

While good progress has been made in recent years, the plan emphasises the importance of the Environment Agency, the water industry and other

stakeholders working in partnership at a catchment level to improve and protect the environment and improve access to water.

From January 2018 the Environment Agency will begin to regulate around 5,000 water users that have historically been exempt from regulation. This will create a fairer system and help protect the environment.

The Environment Agency's work to address unsustainable abstraction should see around 90 per cent of surface water bodies and 77 per cent of groundwater bodies meet the required standards by 2021.

**Notes to editors:**

- The Environment Agency will produce updated abstraction licensing strategies that detail the solutions to environmental issues in local areas around rivers and groundwaters and set out approaches to help abstractors access the water they need.
- Since 2008 the Environment Agency has made changes to over 270 abstraction licences to prevent over 30 billion litres of water per year being removed from the environment where abstraction is unsustainable.
- In the New Year, the Environment Agency will begin piloting and testing a digital system for handling licence applications and data reporting. Modernising these services will improve the user experience as well as supporting reforms to better protect the environment and improve access to water.
- A report will be made to Parliament by May 2019 on the progress made on abstraction reform.

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## [Policy paper: Water abstraction plan 2017](#)

*Updated:* Updated to include the first four Initial Priority Catchments: Idle & Torne in East Midlands, The South Forty Foot in Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire (also known as The Black Sluice), East Suffolk in East Anglia and Cam & Ely Ouse in East Anglia.

These documents set out what the government is doing to reform the management of water abstraction. They summarise how we will work with abstractors to make these changes.

The abstraction plan document summarises all the changes we plan to make. It should be read alongside the more detailed documents covering environment, catchment focus and abstraction licensing service.

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## [News story: Fishing boat skipper gets](#)

## suspended sentence for running his vessel aground off Plymouth

Michael Kinnaird, had earlier pleaded guilty to the charges at Plymouth magistrates court on 6 December, which related to an incident on October. It was shortly after 8.45pm on 7 October 2017, that Mr Kinnaird's vessel, a 21metre trawler FV Algrie left its moorings at Sutton Harbour. It then continued out of the harbour entrance but did not alter course into the shipping channel.

Instead, the FV Algrie kept a steady course at seven knots before running aground at Mountbatten Breakwater. None of the five crew on board was injured and there was no reported pollution as a result.

Minor damage was caused to the vessel and it was recovered back to its moorings on the next high tide.

When interviewed by MCA Enforcement Officers, Mr Kinnaird said he had navigated into and out of the harbour hundreds of times, but on this occasion, became confused when he saw lights from anglers who were fishing from the breakwater. He was asked why he didn't reduce his speed or reverse, use his navigation aids or even his spot light but he could give no answer.

Mr. Kinnaird was sentenced to a total of four months imprisonment which has been suspended for two years. He was also ordered to pay costs of £5000 and £115 victim surcharge.

In passing sentence, District Judge Taylor said that alcohol did affect Mr Kinnaird's actions that night and he didn't accept his explanation about being confused by the lights on the breakwater.

Ian Blair, technical manager from the Maritime & Coastguard Agency's marine office at Plymouth said, 'Preparing a comprehensive passage plan and maintaining a safe and proper navigational watch at all times, by use of all available means, is of paramount importance in order to prevent incidents such as this from occurring.'

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## Consultation outcome: Contracts for Difference (CfD): proposed amendments to the scheme

*Updated:* Part B of government response published, along with follow-up consultation.

We're seeking views on proposed amendments the Contracts for Difference (CfD)

scheme, which provides support for new low carbon electricity generation projects, to enable it to continue to support new generation and provide best value for bill payers in coming years.

Government aims to support the development of onshore wind projects on remote islands, where they benefit local communities. This consultation sets out a proposed definition of remote islands wind, as a new technology that can compete in future auctions for 'less established' technologies. An impact assessment is published regarding this proposal.

The responses to the [Call for Evidence on fuelled technologies in the CfD scheme](#), published in November 2016, have informed the development of a number of policy changes relating to fuelled technologies. This consultation proposes:

- refinements in relation to Advanced Conversion Technologies, to ensure that only more innovative and efficient plants are awarded subsidy
- changes to the overall efficiency requirements for Combined Heat and Power, to ensure that CfD supported plants are of a suitably high overall efficiency; an impact assessment is being published regarding this proposal
- updated greenhouse gas emissions criteria that new projects using solid and gaseous biomass as feedstock will have to comply with

The consultation also makes new proposals to facilitate more accurate forecasting of budget spend, and invites views on various other potential changes to the detailed terms of new CfD contracts.

As part of this consultation, stakeholder engagement events were held in Glasgow, Cardiff and London. The questions raised and points of clarification on the proposed changes are answered in the Stakeholder Q&A.