

# News story: Sports industry can be top of the league in reducing plastic pollution

Environment Secretary Michael Gove will today call on sports leaders from across the Commonwealth to join the fight against plastic pollution in the world's oceans.

As part of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting taking place in London this week, the Environment Secretary will host leaders from across the sports sector on board the HMS Belfast in London to drive forward innovation and agree actions to tackle the global scourge of plastic.

With mass sporting events often generating up to 750,000 plastic bottles and seven tonnes of waste, the Environment Secretary and representatives from Premier League football, swimming and ocean sailing will look at how the sector can use its influence to tackle this blight and bring about global change.

This will build on the work already underway by industry – with this year's Commonwealth Games banning the use of plastic balloons and rolling out water refills to reduce plastic, and Twickenham Stadium introducing a deposit return scheme for 'fan cups', where fans pay an extra £1 for their cup and get the money back when they return it to the bar. Tottenham Hotspur has also announced its commitment to phasing out single-use plastics across all Club operations.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Plastic pollution is one of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time and we all have a role to play to tackle the threats our oceans face.

There are few groups which have the global reach and power the sports sector does to inspire change and mobilise action. The industry is already making great strides, and I look forward to seeing how they can build on this progress to be true ambassadors for global change.

Bill Bush, Executive Director of the Premier League, will also attend the roundtable. He said:

The Premier League is well aware of the importance of taking action against plastic pollution, it affects us all and our fans expect us to do what we can to tackle this threat. We are here today to learn from others as we develop our plans to reduce plastic use

throughout our operations.

We also want to use our reach to fans here and across the world to spread the word that each and every one of us can make a difference by choosing to use less plastic.

Jointly co-hosted with United Nations Environment, attendees at the roundtable will also be encouraged to join the UN's '[Clean Seas](#)' campaign – a global initiative to reduce plastic pollution in the oceans.

Endurance swimmer Lewis Pugh will attend in his role as the UN's Patron of the Oceans. He said:

I've been swimming for 30 years and can be under no illusion life in our oceans is under threat like never before. Beaches across the world are littered with bags, bottles and straws, and plastic has made its way to some of the most remote corners of the ocean.

Single-use plastics have no place in the modern world and I will be urging sportsmen and women, especially those involved with ocean sports, to help us share this important message and be voices for the protection of our oceans.

This year's World Environment Day on June 5 will focus on the issue of plastic pollution – with UN Environment working with sports organisations across the world to take action to address their plastic footprint.

The roundtable comes as just this week the Prime Minister [announced](#) the UK and Vanuatu-led Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance – an agreement between member states to join forces in the fight against plastic.

Britain, together with joint chair Vanuatu, will call on other countries to pledge action on plastics, be this by a ban on microbeads, a commitment to cutting down on single use plastic bags, or other steps to eliminate avoidable plastic waste. New Zealand, Sri Lanka and Ghana have already joined.

To drive this forward, the Prime Minister also announced a £61.4 million package of funding to boost global research and help countries across the Commonwealth stop plastic waste from entering the oceans in the first place.

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**[Guidance: Recovery of abandoned, lost](#)**

# and discarded fishing gear

The guidance should be read alongside MMO marine licence guidance for recreational divers to ensure both licence and other legislative requirements are fully understood and removals take place in a manner that minimises potential damage to the historic environment and marine species and habitats.

## **Competence, equipment and safety**

### **Qualifications**

All those undertaking diving operations should be sufficiently qualified with a relevant diving qualification body e.g. British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC), the Professional Association of Dive Instructors (PADI) or 'Confédération Mondiale des Activités Subaquatiques' (CMAS).

All divers should be sufficiently qualified by their certifying organisation to the maximum depths required during the dive, including the use of gas mixes if required.

### **Leadership**

Any removal activity should start with a clear briefing from the Project Manager ("the PM")

The dive and boat safety briefing should include all the normal information included in all dive day briefings, but must put special emphasis on site specific risks, additional risks from the planned tasks and reference a documented risk assessment highlighting the additional risks needed to be considered when removing fishing gear, e.g. entanglement. The briefing should cover:

- the objectives of the day and what each team will be doing
- the location of the dive site
- the location and type of fishing gear to be removed, determined from the survey
- special equipment required to remove the fishing gear
- consideration for less experienced divers and how these divers will be managed
- specific hazards likely to be encountered and how to manage the risks

All team members should attend this briefing. All project members should follow the instructions of the boat skipper or the PM.

### **Teams**

Teams should conduct pre-dive checks as recommended by their diving organisation before entering the water. These checks should include checks on any additional or special equipment needed for the retrieval, e.g. gas cylinders for lifting bags

The team must have a pre-agreed signal to halt any lifting or cutting operation, and a range of appropriate signals for likely actions during a retrieval.

Divers should ensure that their equipment is streamlined and that any potential entanglement points are removed.

Any inexperienced team members should be mentored before undertaking more complex retrieval operations.

## **Safety and lifting**

Divers must not dive alone. The team members should work together to cut any entanglements and attach the lifting bags, but after this is complete, distinct pre-planned roles should be observed.

It is a critical safety aspect that only one team works on a particular piece of ALDFG at a time. Further to that, once gas is present in the lifting bags, only one diver should be involved in any further cutting or gas addition tasks.

Each team should have one diver who has the role of safety observer during the lifting phase and is not involved in the lifting work itself.

The team should have a pre-agreed signal to halt any lifting or cutting operation. This can take the form of light signal, a touch signal, or any other appropriate method. This signal can be given by any member of the team, resulting in an immediate cessation of the activity until the situation allows a resumption of the task.

Divers should carry sufficient additional gas for the use of lift bags. If using their breathing gas supply, use of this for inflation should be limited to shallow recoveries and small bags <20kg. For deeper recoveries and larger bags, an independent gas source should be used.

If the depth and time of the operation is enough that decompression stops are required, these should be pre-planned with a contingency plan, as per agency guidelines.

## **Removal**

### **General principles**

Divers engaged in recovery of ALDFG should respect the environment in which they are working at all times.

Divers should have a clear plan of where they intend to recover ALDFG by conducting survey dive(s) to work out how much and what type of litter is to be removed. Survey information should be used to generate plans that minimise impact to natural features, wildlife, archaeological remains or other objects of cultural importance. More broadly, divers are encouraged to use their awareness of local endangered or sensitive species to avoid unnecessary

disruption to their habitat (for instance, where the 'snagged' item is colonised at its base, it may be less-disruptive to cut above the area where species are present).

Smaller, low risk objects may be removed during the survey dive leaving larger items that require pre-planning for subsequent dives.

Divers should never interfere with active fishing gear. Removal or damage to such objects is strictly prohibited.

When ALDFG is being recovered, divers should endeavour to free any living organisms caught in the gear before it is removed, within the boundaries of the law regarding protected species. If this is not possible, then they should be returned to the water as soon as possible.

## **Dealing with entanglement**

### **Natural features and living organisms**

If an item of ALDFG is entangled in a natural feature such as rocks, reefs or other living organisms such as kelp, then the ALDFG should be cut free of the feature using suitable cutting implements. When cutting the ALDFG clear, forces applied to the features should be kept to a minimum to avoid damage.

During the lift, great care should be taken to ensure that no damage is done to the feature. This is achieved by adding sufficient gas to apply tension to the lifting bag straps, and a small amount of the ALDFG object, but not so much gas as to result in damage or disturbance to the natural feature or living organisms.

Whilst working on the ALDFG it is important to maintain good buoyancy control and to be aware of fins and dangling equipment that could inadvertently cause damage.

### **Wrecks**

If an item of ALDFG is entangled in the wreck of a ship, aircraft or other manmade structure, then the ALDFG should be cut free of the structure using suitable cutting implements. It is important to remember that all military aircraft are protected places under the Protection of Military Remains act 1986.

When cutting the ALDFG clear, no force should be applied to the wreck to avoid damage. It should be possible to do this by following the best practice principles of a diving lift (i.e. using a small amount of lifting bag inflation to gain initial tension, cutting the item at the base of where it is snagged and using additional lifting capacity to remove the item).

When conducting removals, great care should be taken to ensure that no damage occurs. Buried gear should simply be cut free; digging of the seabed to identify the source of the gear is not recommended, as sediment disturbance can impair visibility.

No part of the wreck or structure itself should be removed to the surface. It is not necessary to notify the receiver of wreck about the removal of ALDFG from a wreck unless the removal includes ALDFG from the wreck of a fishing vessel. In such instances details of the materials removed should be reported to the Receiver of Wreck within 28 days.

### **Picking and lifting**

ALDFG that can be picked up by hand should be placed in a small bag or container and carried to the surface.

Care should be taken to ensure that any hooks or sharp edges do not injure the divers. Sturdy gloves are recommended for this type of work. It is recommended that an up to date first aid kit is stored on the support vessel.

For hand-picking, it is recommended that the total weight of the bag containing recovered items should not exceed 5kg when full. Additional weight can affect buoyancy and cause a hazard to the diver. The bag should never be attached to the diver by any clips or lanyards. This technique is typically restricted to small objects, monofilament lines and hooks and similar objects.

Suitable containers may be carried by the diver, where they do not pose entanglement hazards and will only contain lightweight litter and ALDFG.

Collections of smaller amounts of ALDFG that in total weigh in excess of 5kg should be placed in larger bags or containers and removed with the assistance of a lifting bag.

Objects can be cut into pieces for easier handling.

This technique is well suited to ropes and larger pieces of netting. The container or bag keeps the objects constrained into a smaller volume, reducing the risk of entanglement with divers when the gear is lifted to the surface.

### **Larger items**

Large objects that cannot be moved into bags or containers should be removed directly using lifting bags.

The process of removing the ALDFG should follow the following sequence:

1. Cut obvious elements of ALDFG that are attached to seabed features.
2. Attach lifting bag(s) to appropriate points on the ALDFG using karabiners, slings or ropes.
3. Gently inflate the lifting bag to tension the lifting points.
4. Review the entanglement status of the object, and cut any more attachments.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 until the object is free of the seabed.
6. Clear the dive team from the immediate area.
7. Add gas incrementally to the lifting bag(s) until the object becomes just positively buoyant

8. Observe the object rising to the surface for as long as the visibility allows.

## **Disposal of Waste**

Any ALDFG removed from the sea and recovered to land should be disposed of in a responsible manner. Planning for this phase of the work should be completed before any removal occurs.

Recycling of ALDFG is the preferred disposal route, but this is not always possible or practical. It should however be investigated for all projects. The project manager should consult with the relevant authorities regarding disposal.

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## **Guidance: Recovery of abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear**

The guidance should be read alongside MMO marine licence guidance for recreational divers to ensure both licence and other legislative requirements are fully understood and removals take place in a manner that minimises potential damage to the historic environment and marine species and habitats.

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## **[Guidance: Marine licensing guidance for recreational divers](#)**

*Updated:* HTML guide added

## **Legislative and policy**

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 changed how certain activities that occur in tidal rivers, on the coast and out at sea are consented to protect the marine environment and all that it contains. Activities sometimes carried out by divers including deposit, removal and dredge activities became marine licensable activities in certain circumstances.

The MMO is responsible for marine licensing in English Inshore and offshore areas and Northern Ireland offshore areas and in some instances for activities undertaken outside of this area in other parts of the world. The MMO are also responsible for the management of non-licensable activities that occur within marine protected areas.

Details of the [MMO's jurisdiction](#).

Divers can check the MMO's [geographical information system](#) if they are unsure if the location of their dive falls within the part of the UK marine area managed by the MMO.

## **When do I need a marine licence for recreation diving?**

In most cases the activities undertaken in the course of a recreational dive will be limited to deposit and removal activities.

The circumstances in which the deposit or removal activity is carried out is key to understanding whether the activity proposed may be one that needs a licence.

Deposit – If a deposit in the sea, or on or under the seabed, is made from a vehicle, vessel, aircraft, marine structure or floating container it is likely require a licence.

A deposit in the sea, or on or under the seabed, carried out by hand alone (where the object is not taken from a vessel into the sea as part of the process) does NOT require a marine licence.

### **Example 1**

A diver intends to dive at a location close to the shore. The diver wishes to place an object on the seabed at the location. The diver accesses the sea from the shore and swims to the location carrying the object and deposits the item. As the object to be deposited has not been taken from a vessel in the course of the activity the deposit is made 'by hand' and no licence is required.

### **Example 2**

A diver intends to dive at a location away from the shore which requires the use of a vessel to transport both the diver and equipment. The diver wishes to place an object on the seabed at the location. The diver accesses the sea from the vessel taking with them an object which is subsequently left in the sea or on or under the sea bed. The object placed in the sea is an object deposited from a vessel and as such is likely to require a marine licence (see [recreational dive activity table](#)). The use of the vessel in the process is key.

Removal – If a removal from the seabed is made using a vehicle, vessel,

aircraft, marine structure or floating container (Lifting bag) it is likely to require a marine licence.

A removal from the seabed carried out by hand alone (where a vessel or lifting bag is not used to make the removal does NOT require a marine licence.

'Seabed' means the ground under the sea (the seafloor) and includes anything resting on it such as a wreck.

### **Example 1**

In the course of a dive a diver discovers some abandoned, lost, discarded fishing gear (ALDFG). As there is only a small amount of ALDFG gear the diver is able to pick it up and carry it back to the surface where it is transferred to a vessel. The diver repeats this process several times until all the ALDFG is recovered. The removal of the objects from the seabed takes place by hand and does NOT require a marine licence.

### **Example 2**

In the course of a dive a diver discovers some ALDFG. The nature of ALDFG in question is of a size and quantity that requires the diver to use a lifting bag to raise it to the surface where it is winched onto the vessel. The removal of the item from the seabed takes place using a lifting bag (floating container) and as such a marine licence is likely to be required (see [recreational dive activity table](#)). While a winch on the vessel is also used in this scenario it is not relevant as the ALDFG was no longer on the seabed when it was engaged.

### **Example 3**

In the course of a dive a diver discovers a large heavy object and wishes to recover it. The size and weight of the item means that it is necessary to winch it directly from the seabed. The removal of the item from the seabed takes place using a winch on a vessel and as such a marine licence is required (see [recreational dive activity table](#)).

If your proposed activity is one that will involve 'deposit from' or 'removal using' one of those means set out, there are some further considerations which ultimately determine whether or not a licence will be required.

## **Requirements under other legislation**

The need for a marine licence as set out in this document does not absolve divers from requirements under other legislation. Divers should familiarise themselves with those requirements to ensure compliance. Requirements likely to be relevant to divers include, but are not limited to, those set out:

### **Health and Safety**

- The Diving at Work regulations 1997, including the HSE ACOPS

The approved code of practice and associated guidance is available [here](#)

## **Historic environment**

- the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973
- the Merchant Shipping Act 1995
- the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979
- the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986

Details of the law and responsibilities of divers under relevant legislation including details of the process for reporting wreck can be found [here](#).

## **Other environmental**

- the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- the Conservation of Seals Act 1970
- conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
- conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
- marine and Coastal Access Act 2009

You must have a marine wildlife licence if you want to carry out an activity in the marine area that would otherwise be an offence under UK and EU legislation (disturb, take or kill protected species).

MMO licence activities in English waters below low water mark (high water mark for seals).

As the issue of a wildlife licence permits an offence to be committed, such as disturbance or taking of a species, a licence is issued as a last resort.

Full details about marine wildlife licence requirements can be found [here](#).

Details of the law and responsibilities of divers under other relevant legislation can be found [here](#).

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## **[Notice: PR4 3PJ, Cuadrilla Bowland Limited \(EPR/KP3731JR/A001\): environmental permit application advertisement](#)**

The Environment Agency consults the public on certain applications for waste operations, mining waste operations, installations, water discharge and groundwater activities. The arrangements are explained in its [Public Participation Statement](#)

These notices explain:

- what the application is about
- where you can visit to see the application documents
- when you need to comment by

The Environment Agency will decide:

- whether to grant or refuse the application
- what conditions to include in the permit (if granted)