

Press release: Applications for permits received at Holmwood oilfield

The Environment Agency has received 3 applications for environmental permits at the Holmwood oil and gas site, off Coldharbour Lane, Surrey.

These applications are for 1 bespoke Environmental Permit and 2 Standard Rules Permits. They have been submitted by the site Europa Oil and Gas Limited to begin exploration drilling for oil or gas at the site.

In deciding whether or not to issue the permits, the Environment Agency will take into account all relevant considerations and legal requirements.

You can view and comment on the [application](#).

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

An environmental permit sets out stringent conditions that a site must adhere to. We will not issue an environmental permit for a site if we consider that activities taking place will cause significant pollution to the environment or harm to human health.

We are in the process of determining the applications to permit this site and we want to hear from the public and understand peoples' views. Everybody has the chance to see what the bespoke permit may look like and to raise any additional concerns before we make any final decision.

For all media enquiries please contact 0800 141 2743 or email Southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk

Press release: Government helps dementia sufferers as part of next step in fight against nuisance calls

Rogue traders who bombard the elderly and vulnerable with nuisance phone calls are to be stopped in their tracks by a targeted Government scheme designed to protect those with dementia.

Every year, thousands of complaints are made about nuisance phone calls and

in February last year, one firm alone was fined £350,000 for making more than 46 million automated calls.

To help tackle the problem, Prime Minister Theresa May, has today announced the launch of a half-a-million-pound project which will see hi-tech call blocking devices installed in the homes of some of the most vulnerable people across the UK who have been identified by doctors, Trading Standards officials and local councils as being at risk from nuisance callers.

The trueCall devices will completely block all recorded messages, silent calls and calls from numbers not already pre-identified by the home owner – offering particular protection to those with dementia.

The Prime Minister said:

We want to create a fairer society by cracking down on unscrupulous practices which target the most vulnerable.

This new, targeted scheme is the latest step in the government's fight against nuisance calls, protecting those who are most at risk, including those with dementia.

We have seen people tricked out of thousands of pounds by scam callers and this government is determined to clamp down on their activities once and for all.

The project, which is being funded by DCMS, co-ordinated by the National Trading Standards Scams Team and supported by local Trading Standards departments, is the latest of a series of Government crackdowns on nuisance callers

A similar trial scheme run by the National Trading Standards Scams Team last year resulted in 93% of participants feeling safer in their homes. This included one person who had previously paid £150,000 to a scam caller.

The chief executive of Dementia UK, Hilda Hayo, said:

We welcome this project as some people living with dementia are vulnerable to nuisance callers who offer bogus services and financial schemes.

These calls can not only have a negative financial impact but can also lead to psychological affects such as anxiety, depression and a loss of self-esteem. We frequently receive calls to our national helpline from family members who are concerned that their relative with dementia has fallen prey to rogue traders.

This scheme will see the special devices installed in 1,500 homes. They will screen calls and can either ask callers to enter a security code which only

genuine callers will know, or direct them to instead call a friend or relative of the home owner.

Lord Toby Harris, the Chair of National Trading Standards, said:

The impact of nuisance calls – both emotional and financial – cannot be underestimated. We know that these call blockers can make a real difference to people's lives and give those in vulnerable situations, such as those with dementia, and their families a greater sense of protection and security.

Working with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), the Government has already forced companies to display their caller ID when cold calling and given out a series of hefty fines – totalling almost £7 million.

The Government will shortly implement plans to slap company bosses and firms with fines of up to £1 million if they are found to be in breach of Privacy and Electronics Communications Regulations.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- The funding for this scheme includes £300,000 to supply call blocking machines with the remaining budget spent on the management of the service and raising public awareness of scam and nuisance calls.
 - Plans to make company bosses liable follows previous legislation where only businesses were liable for fines. Many of the businesses tried to escape paying nuisance call penalties by declaring bankruptcy – only to open up again under a different name.
 - The ICO has issued fines totalling almost £7 million since 2012.
 - In 2015, the ICO received almost 170,000 complaints about nuisance calls.
 - To report a nuisance call visit: www.ico.org.uk
 - See what else Government is doing to combat nuisance calls by searching for: #NoNuisance on social media.
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Press release: Antrim Area Hospital visit

Earlier this morning the Secretary of State, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, visited Antrim Area hospital to see at first hand the issues and challenges that our current Health Service professionals face on a daily basis, and how the current political instability and lack of devolved institutions in Northern Ireland continues to add further burdens to an already pressurised health system.

The Northern Health Trust, of which Antrim Area Hospital is one of the major hospitals provides services for a population of approximately 471,000 – the largest resident population in Northern Ireland. Over recent months, the Trust have launched a reform and modernisation of the services they provide with a strong emphasis on maximising the range and sustainability of local services as well as ensuring integrated, and locality based community services delivered in partnership to allow and support people to live independently and avoid hospitalisation as far as possible.

Speaking after his visit, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

I was absolutely delighted to be able to visit Antrim Area Hospital and witness the truly remarkable work that is delivered by the doctors, nurses and support health care professionals on a daily basis. They provide a modernised approach to healthcare, ensuring local people can avail of a range of services close to their home locality. But the lack of devolved institutions provide uncertainty for those providing vital front line services.

Public services will suffer if there continues to be political stalemate. Budgets need to be established in order to provide much needed services for the public. That is why I am urging the political parties to continue to talk and find a way through the outstanding issues. It remains important that an agreement is reached which enables the restoration of devolved government – this is absolutely critical for Northern Ireland and its people.

Whilst I recognise some of the issues are difficult, they are not insurmountable. The window in which this can happen is narrow, but it is my hope that the politicians will do all in their power to help to bring about the resumption of secure devolved government, an objective supported by the majority of the people in Northern Ireland, is our shared aim.

We owe it to the entire community to deliver the best outcome for Northern Ireland – strong devolved government with locally accountable Ministers.

Press release: Multi-million pound boost for community-led services

Communities Minister Andrew Percy today (6 April 2017) announced a multi-million pound cash boost to community-led efforts giving local people greater control over local services.

More than 54 projects will receive a share of over £3 million communities funding to help deliver additional services.

A third of the projects receiving funding will focus on offering personalised schemes to improve people's health and general wellbeing. Other schemes will tackle social isolation, help people find a job, and support those facing homelessness.

Communities Minister Andrew Percy said:

Making a real difference to people's lives doesn't always happen by Whitehall diktat. It also comes from the dedication and inventiveness of local people who know their area best and the issues most important to them.

That's why we're supporting these innovative projects which provide tailored services that make a real difference to people's lives.

The Communities Fund

The [Communities Fund](#) was launched in December 2016 and totals £3.25 million. It's targeted at providing dedicated and personalised support to some of the most vulnerable people in society and those people who are struggling to manage.

Similar programmes have shown that significant benefits can be achieved from small amounts of funding that help local community projects to try different approaches to local priorities. For example, a community-led project in Ilfracombe, Devon, has addressed the high levels of youth unemployment in the town by creating 50 apprenticeships. This has saved around £1 million in benefits and is now funded by local partners. It has since expanded to 100 annual apprenticeships, with more than 50 young people helped into full time

employment.

Communities Fund projects include:

Colchester Borough Council and Essex Public Health

A project in Colchester involving local schools, high street retailers and doctors' surgeries. It aims to get more people out walking and socialising as a way to improve health and wellbeing.

Local residents will play a game on the street by tapping specially designed boxes on lampposts with a fob to earn points. An earlier pilot scheme with over 10,000 residents saw a huge jump in levels of fitness, with those meeting Department of Health guidelines on daily exercise reaching 48% from the previous 27%.

Plymouth City council

Plymouth City Council, with Devon and Cornwall Housing, NHS England and Royal British Legion, will deliver employment skills to local homeless people and other hard to reach groups. They will be given the opportunity to learn how to mend bicycles from expert mechanics.

The regular training will also give them the opportunity to earn qualifications. The workshop will also be open to the public, so customers will be able to take advantage of the skills of the newly trained bike mechanics and in turn allow them to develop customer service skills.

Further information

The Communities Fund was launched in December 2016. See [more information](#) on this website. View a [list of the Communities Fund recipients](#) (PDF, 84.4KB, 4 pages) .

The [Localism Act 2011](#) gives communities more say locally, from regulars running their local pub and protecting other treasured assets, to ambitious plans for new development, new jobs and better targeted local services.

Want to get involved in your community? See the [My Community website](#) for details on how to go about it.

[Press release: Newtownards shooting](#)

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, said:

Shooting someone in the elbows, knees and ankles is barbaric. The criminals who did this do not represent anyone. No one in Northern Ireland wants this; people want to live in a peaceful society. I urge anyone with information about this shooting to contact the Police Service of Northern Ireland.