

## **News story: British businesses boosted by tax changes coming into effect in April**

[unable to retrieve full-text content]This month, a number of new tax changes come into effect, benefiting millions of businesses across the UK.

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## **News story: Spring pay bump for Britain's workers as tax changes come into effect**

[unable to retrieve full-text content]Millions of workers will benefit from increases to the Personal Allowance and Higher Rate Threshold on 6 April.

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## **Press release: Minister for the Americas statement on developments in Venezuela**

On 28 and 29 March 2017, the Venezuelan Supreme Court issued two rulings giving itself new powers to exercise the National Assembly's legislative powers and restrict the parliamentary immunity of MPs. This effectively limits the constitutional powers of the National Assembly, which has been democratically elected by the people of Venezuela.

The Minister for Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan, said:

I am utterly shocked by the latest developments in Venezuela. The manner in which the Supreme Court of Venezuela has wrested power from the parliament represents a total breakdown in the separation of powers. Indeed, the Venezuelan Prosecutor General has herself said the decision of the Supreme Court is unconstitutional.

A strong, independent parliament is vital to any democracy and

necessary to address the economic and social challenges Venezuela faces. The Venezuelan Government must therefore urgently act to restore Venezuela's democratic norms. Continued shortages of basic goods are having a detrimental impact on the lives of ordinary Venezuelan citizens. I implore President Maduro and his Government to take positive action to rectify this situation.

## **Further information**

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## **Further information**

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# News story: South West Water fail to report dead fish after polluting Devon stream

South West Water has been ordered to pay £89,000 in fines and costs for polluting a stream in Woodbury near Exeter. The case was brought by the Environment Agency.

A court heard how large numbers of fish died following the incident at Ham Lane Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) in September 2014 following an illegal discharge. CSOs are allowed to discharge during storm conditions to prevent the internal flooding of properties. They are not permitted to operate during periods of dry weather.

The spill was caused by a blockage that resulted in effluent being discharged into a nearby stream over one to two days. The pollution adversely affected water quality in the stream and killed more than 150 fish.

The water company must report any fish kills that occur following a pollution incident. It failed to report this important information to the Environment Agency.

Instead, a witness alerted the Environment Agency to the seriousness of the incident after seeing South West Water staff collect and remove dead fish from below the CSO discharge pipe over several days as part of its remediation work on the stream.

The discharge occurred during a period of dry weather. The dead fish included minnows, stone loach, bullhead and eels.

Pete Ball of the Environment Agency said:

It is important water companies regularly inspect and maintain their structures and assets such as CSOs to ensure they are operating in accordance with their permit and do not cause pollution.

While South West Water responded quickly to this incident, it failed to report the extent of the environmental impact of this spill, especially the fish deaths.

Appearing before Exeter Crown Court, South West Water Ltd was fined £70,000 and ordered to pay £19,023 costs after pleading guilty to breaching its environmental permit at Ham Lane Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO), Woodbury on or around 27 September 2014.