

[Press release: Environment Agency receives applications for Palmers Wood oilfield](#)

From:

First published:

20 February 2017

Environment Agency to decide whether to issue 2 environmental permits for the Palmers Wood oil and gas site in Surrey.

The Environment Agency has received 2 applications for environmental permits at the Palmers Wood oil and gas site.

These applications have been submitted by the site operator to bring the site into line with the current regulations for conventional oil and gas sites. This is part of the Environment Agency's review of all oil and gas permits granted prior to October 2013.

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

[You can find further information on the application and details of how to comment online.](#)

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 re-permit this site and we want to hear from the public and understand people's views. Everybody has the chance to see what the permit may look like and to raise any additional concerns before we make any final decision.

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[News story: Civil news: change of Specialist Quality Mark administrator](#)

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New Specialist Quality Mark administration contract starts in tandem with

small changes to audit process.

A new administrator will be responsible for delivering work for the Specialist Quality Mark (SQM) from 1 April 2017. The work will in future be carried out by Recognising Excellence and there will be a small number of changes to the audit process.

The current contract with SQM Delivery Partnership ends on 31 March 2017.

What does this mean for providers?

1. Starting 1 April 2017 audits should be booked by emailing: sqm@recognisingexcellence.co.uk.
2. Audit award process will have fewer stages.
3. Increase in requirements at the pre-quality mark stage.

More details are available on our 'quality standards' page on GOV.UK – see link below.

Requirement for contract-holders

It is a requirement for legal aid contract holders to hold either the SQM or the equivalent Lexcel accreditation. This will continue for anyone wanting to deliver services under the new civil contracts in 2018.

We confirmed this requirement would remain when we announced on 20 January 2017 that a procurement process for these contracts would start in April 2017.

Accreditation valid after 31 March 2017

All organisations with SQMs valid after 31 March 2017 should check they have a copy of their certificate.

If you are unable to find your current SQM certificate, you may request a copy from the outgoing audit provider, SQM Delivery Partnership. Such requests must be made before 31 March 2017.

Further information

[Legal Aid Agency quality standards](#) – to find out more about the standards and new administration arrangements

[Rowley: We must use tax powers to make](#)

Scotland a fairer place

By Scottish Labour deputy leader Alex Rowley | February 20, 2017



By Scottish Labour deputy leader Alex Rowley

Tuesday will be a historic day in Scotland's devolution story.

For the first time, the Scottish Parliament will decide how to raise, as well as spend, money.

We have a chance to choose a different path from the Tories.

For Scottish Labour, that means turning our backs on austerity and delivering a progressive budget. We would use the new tax powers of the Scottish Parliament to make sure the richest in society pay their fair share.

That would mean raising the top rate of tax for those on £150,000 a year or more to 50p.

Scottish Labour would also change income tax levels by just 1p more than the Tory Chancellor Philip Hammond. With the extra money raised, we would invest in valued local services such as schools and care for the elderly that face being decimated under the SNP.

Nicola Sturgeon might have spent her career in politics arguing for more powers for the Scottish Parliament and against austerity – but in this historic vote she will show the only power she is really interested in is the power to pass-on Tory cuts. I believe that our Parliament here in Scotland must be about more than simply being a conveyor belt for Tory austerity and that is why we must use the powers of that parliament to defend communities and invest in the future of Scotland.

Many people have become more aware of the failure of the SNP to do anything about austerity, but progressive voters will rightly be even more disappointed in the Scottish Greens, who are propping-up SNP cuts. By supporting this budget, Patrick Harvie's party has sold out those who put their trust in them through the ballot box.

The SNP/Green budget will deliver £170million of cuts to our valued public services. On this historic day, Scottish Labour will choose a different path. We will vote against austerity and continue the fight to ensure the Scottish Parliament uses its new powers to improve the life-chances of our children and the most vulnerable in communities up and down Scotland.

China's H7N9 bird flu mutates, no immediate added threat to human

The H7N9 bird flu has mutated to a new strain in south China, which is proven more dangerous to poultry but poses no new threat to humans, the country's disease control and prevention authorities said Sunday on its website.

The mutation was found in January in two people who had contracted H7N9 bird flu in Guangdong Province. Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (China CDC) has lately confirmed the finding and reported the case to the World Health Organization (WHO), according to China CDC's website.

The agricultural sector has also found the mutation in four poultry samples from Guangdong, China CDC said.

On the basis of joint study with experts from the agricultural sector, China CDC has concluded that the mutation "does not make the virus more infectious to human at the moment."

Chinese health and agricultural authorities will continue to study the mutated strain's source and its impact while intensifying monitoring to detect H7N9's further mutations, according to China CDC's website.

China has stepped up prevention of H7N9 avian flu transmission. It has been linked to at least 88 deaths since January. About 271 human infections cases were reported.

Most infected humans have had contact with poultry or dead birds. Among them were the two patients from Guangdong.

Bird flu is known to easily mutate. The public are concerned that a mutation might make it more infectious to humans, China CDC said on its website.