

## [News story: New stamp duty land tax surcharge for non-UK resident homebuyers to be introduced](#)

A new surcharge levied on non-UK resident home buyers is being considered as part of the government's effort to help control the rise of house prices. Proceeds of the new surcharge would be put towards measures to tackle rough sleeping. The government has committed to ending rough sleeping by 2027.

[The Stamp Duty Land Tax: non-UK resident surcharge consultation](#) will look at how a new 1% increase to stamp duty costs for non-UK residents buying residential property in England and Northern Ireland would work. This follows a commitment made by the Prime Minister and a subsequent announcement of the proposed rate at Budget 2018.

Mel Stride, Financial Secretary to the Treasury and Paymaster General said:

The UK is and will remain an open and dynamic economy, but some evidence shows that non-UK resident buyers of UK property could be inflating house prices.

A 1% surcharge could help more people own their own homes in the future, and its proceeds will go towards tackling rough sleeping, boosting our plan to halve the numbers of rough sleepers by 2022.

The consultation will cover all aspects of the charge, including how non-residents will be defined and how it applies to companies. Further details will be published after the consultation has concluded on how much the charge is expected to raise.

The charge will apply to any person who is non-resident in the UK, including certain UK-resident companies which are controlled by overseas shareholders. However, crown employees working abroad – such as military service personnel – will not have to pay the surcharge at all whilst those who buy a residential property and then move to the UK will be eligible for a refund of their extra payment.

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## [News story: Newly protected sites](#)

# safeguard fabulous fungi

Some of the country's rarest and most threatened fungi will be better protected after Natural England announced the notification of two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

[2019 marks the Government's Year of Green Action](#), a year-long drive to help people to connect with, protect and enhance nature.

This doubles the number of sites chosen for designations specifically for their fungi. These two new SSSIs provide protection for over 70 additional hectares for important and spectacular fungi, as well as nationally important grasslands and meadows.

The first site is [Dorset's Down Farm, an eight hectares site near Beaminster](#) and home to a nationally important assemblage of grassland fungi, in particular a rich variety of waxcaps and clubs, corals and spindles. These fungi thrive in traditionally managed grasslands and Down Farm's richness is testament to the careful stewardship by the land owner.

Andrew Smith, Natural England's area manager for Dorset, said:

This Site of Special Scientific Interest designation is a reflection of how rare and special Down Farm is as a place for nature.

The traditionally managed hay meadows support a rich flora. In spring there are thousands of the much-declined green-winged orchid. In autumn, the grasslands are equally colourful and spectacular with waxcaps, corals, spindles and club fungi.

This 'waxcap' grassland in west Dorset is now recognised as being of national importance. Notifying the meadow helps safeguard these important natural features that the land owner has nurtured and cared for so well through traditional hay meadow management. Natural England is delighted to recognise the owner's good work and looks forward to this spectacular place being cherished long into the future.

Natural England, and the many people and organisations we work with, are so pleased we can take this important step to ensuring this site has a secure and healthy future. We are grateful to the owner of the meadows and to our partners who have worked with us to establish this designation.

The second notification is [The Leasowes in Halesowen, an area of 63 hectares in the borough of Dudley near Birmingham](#) and one of the best sites in England for its spectacular displays of grassland fungi, including an amazing 28 species of the brightly coloured waxcap mushrooms.

The citrine waxcap, which is on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's global red data list – a list of species at threat of extinction – was recorded at [The Leasowes](#) in 2017.

Pink, golden and parrot waxcaps are amongst the other species spotted at the site off Mucklow Hill.

Emma Johnson, Natural England's area manager for West Midlands, said:

England's Sites of Special Scientific Interest are essential to look after the very best examples of our precious natural heritage and wildlife for generations to come. We are delighted to designate the rare species-rich pastures and grassland fungi at The Leasowes.

It is a great example of how urban sites can hold nationally significant habitats, providing a wonderful place for both people and nature. The designation is a timely recognition of all of the management and conservation work that has gone into the site by wardens, golf course managers, volunteers and community groups over many years.

We see the designation as an important step in making sure the place is enjoyed and thrives well into the future.

SSSIs protect the very best examples of our precious natural heritage and wildlife for the future. Natural England plays a pivotal role in designating these sites, monitoring and reporting their condition and advising landowners on their management.

These notifications take the total number of English grassland SSSIs selected for fungi up to four. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee has recently published new guidelines for the selection of SSSIs for fungi which were used for the first time in the selection of these sites.

Tim Wilkins, Natural England's Senior Specialist in fungi, said:

There are very few grasslands in the whole of England that support such a spectacular array of fungi. This reflects the great antiquity of the grassland at The Leasowes, all the more remarkable for its proximity to the Birmingham conurbation.

As well as the colourful waxcap mushrooms, the site is also important for its fairy club fungi and earth-tongues. It's great to know that this site and its wonderful fungi will be preserved for current and future generations to enjoy.

Dr Martyn Ainsworth, Research Leader in Mycology, [Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew](#) and co-author of the new guidelines for the selection of fungal SSSIs, said:

It is just brilliant to see two more English SSSIs notified for their spectacular and enigmatic waxcap grassland fungi, which are in general decline right across Europe.

It is especially encouraging and uplifting to note that these designations have occurred so soon after the publication of the new guidelines for selecting such important fungal sites.

The government has laid out its ambition in the [25 Year Environment Plan](#) for a growing and resilient network of land, water and sea that is richer in plants and wildlife.

The Plan sets out our ambition to create and restore an additional 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat, and develop a Nature Recovery Network.

Visit the [Year of Green Action website](#) to hear inspirational stories of green action, download a copy of our partner toolkit and share your own stories.

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## [Press release: New system launched to maintain environmental standards on harmful gases in No Deal Brexit scenario](#)



A selection of pre-packaged foods in a refrigerator

The government has launched a new system to ensure the UK maintains current restrictions on the use of fluorinated greenhouse gases in the event of a no deal Brexit.

The [new online system](#), launched today, will control the use of these harmful greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming. This includes Fluorinated gases (F gases), powerful greenhouse gases used in refrigerators and air

conditioners, as well as [Ozone Depleting Substances \(ODS\)](#), which damage the Earth's ozone layer.

If the UK leaves the EU on 29 March without a deal, UK businesses that produce or trade in these gases or products that contain them will have to register on the new system by 12 April 2019. This will replace the current system which controls emissions for all EU Member States.

The new system will enable the UK to continue its ambitious commitment to phase down the use of F gas by 79% between 2015 and 2030 to combat climate change.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Delivering a negotiated deal with the EU remains the government's top priority, but it is the job of a responsible government to ensure we are prepared for all scenarios, including no deal.

The new system is part of the government's commitment to maintain environmental standards once we leave the EU. The continued phase out of harmful greenhouse gases is critical to the global fight against climate change.

Under the new requirements, if the UK leaves the EU without a deal:

- Businesses that produce or import F gas or ODSs in the UK must register to the new UK system. Businesses are able to register between 11 February and 12 April 2019. UK businesses which are already registered on the EU system will receive an email from Defra about how to register. Other businesses can also [register online](#);
- Businesses that register before exit day (29 March 2019) will be able to operate as normal from 30 March 2019. Anyone who registers between 30 March and 12 April 2019 would have to wait for their registration and quota application to be approved before they can trade;
- Businesses looking to secure an F Gas quota for the first time would need to wait until after 12 April 2019 before they can use their quota to import gas. Anyone registering after 12 April 2019 would not get a quota for 2019;
- UK businesses that import products containing F gas or ODSs must be authorised under the new UK system;
- UK businesses that export F gas or ODSs, or products containing them, to the EU would need to set up an office in the EU or appoint an Only Representative to meet EU regulations; and

- Businesses and members of the public that use products that contain F gas or ODSs should continue to operate as they do now as regulations and supply will remain the same.

Technicians qualified in the UK to service products that use F gas or ODSs, such as refrigerators and air conditioners, will continue to be authorised to operate in the UK but not in the EU.

UK certified technicians who work in the EU should monitor decisions made by the EU Commission and Member State governments.

Businesses and technicians that may be affected should read the [latest guidance on using and trading in F gas and ODSs](#) after the UK leaves the EU.

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1. 11 February 2019 Changes to links
2. 11 February 2019 First published.

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## [Press release: Seven years in jail for bosses who recklessly risk pensions](#)

A new criminal offence of 'wilful or reckless behaviour' in relation to pensions will be introduced under the proposals to crack down on abuse of final or average salary schemes.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Amber Rudd, said:

The vast majority of bosses take their responsibilities seriously and look after their workers' retirement funds.

However, for too long the reckless few playing fast and loose with people's futures have got away scot-free. Acts of astonishing arrogance and abandon punished only with fines, barely denting bosses' bank balances.

Meanwhile workers who have done the right thing and saved for retirement, confident their investments were safe, are left facing a leaner later life.

That cannot be right, which is why, for the first time, we're going to make wilful or reckless behaviour relating to pensions a criminal offence.

The move is designed to ensure company bosses who allow deficits to escalate to unsustainable levels, or who endanger their workers' savings through chronic mismanagement, face the full force of the law.

The intention to introduce a new criminal offence of wilful or reckless behaviour in relation to a pension scheme, and the recommended maximum sentence, is included in the [government's response to a consultation on enhancing The Pensions Regulator's powers](#).

It comes as latest figures revealed more than 10 million people have been brought into workplace pensions saving by automatic enrolment since 2012.

The milestone confirms the success of the government's flagship policy requiring employers to enrol eligible workers into a workplace pension scheme.

Secretary of State Amber Rudd, added:

Automatic enrolment is an extraordinary success story. Thanks to this revolutionary reform, 10 million people can look forward to a more secure future and a better retirement.

That is a remarkable achievement. Workplace pensions had fallen out of fashion and were seen as the preserve of older, wealthier people. Now saving is the norm across the UK, wherever you work.

As we reflect on this milestone, we will of course be considering how we can reach even more people – with our ambition to bring in younger workers and enable everyone, particularly part-time and lower earners and the self-employed, to save more.

Minimum contribution rates under automatic enrolment are due to rise from 5% to 8% in April, as part of the government's plans to help people save even more.

Attitudes towards workplace pension saving are positive and, thanks to automatic enrolment, pension saving is becoming normal. Saving behaviour is sticking: the first increase in minimum contributions which took place last year has not prompted people to stop saving.

The proportion stopping saving through automatic enrolment was just 0.7% in the three months following the April 2018 increase in contribution rates, compared to 0.6% for the 4 year period beforehand.

With record numbers investing in their retirement, the government is introducing a number of additional protections for savers, including a new authorisation regime to govern trusts administering pensions.

The Department for Work and Pensions has already unveiled pioneering proposals to facilitate industry to deliver 'pensions dashboards', providing all the facts and figures about someone's pension savings in one place online.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5084

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## **Press release: 'Don't be a Space Invader' – says former 'Stig' Ben Collins**

Ben – best known for his role on BBC motoring show TopGear as the 'tame' racing driver in the white suit – has coached hundreds of celebrities from Tom Cruise to Lionel Richie around the race-track, and is also a championship winning Le Mans racing driver.

But today his focus was on the drivers travelling on England's motorways and major A-roads every day, and a message to them about the risks of driving too close to the vehicle in front.

He said:

I discovered the dangers of tailgating at a very early age – in an overly enthusiastic game of musical chairs. The music stopped. So did the kid in front of me. But I didn't. I face-planted the back of his head instead.

Following the vehicle in front too closely reduces your vision to zero, along with your time to react to danger. Stay safe, stay back and look ahead.

Statistics show that one in eight of all road casualties are caused by people who drive too close to the vehicle in front, with more than 100 people killed or seriously injured each year.

Nearly 9 out of 10 people say they have either been tailgated or seen it. And more than a quarter of drivers admitted to tailgating.



While a small minority of tailgating is deliberate, most is unintentional by drivers who are simply unaware they are dangerously invading someone else's space.

Last September, Highways England launched a campaign featuring the well-known Space Invader video game character to alert drivers to the anti-social nature and risks of tailgating.

A survey by the company revealed that tailgating is the biggest single bugbear that drivers have about other road users. And in-car research – using dashcams, facial recognition, emotion tracking and heart monitors – reveals that a driver's typical reaction to someone who tailgates them is surprise, anger and contempt, with a spike in heart rate.

Highways England says good drivers leave plenty of safe space for themselves and others.

Richard Leonard, Head of Road Safety at Highways England, said:

It's great to have someone of Ben's experience backing the campaign and the message today is really simple around tailgating. We know that if you get too close to the car in front, you won't be able to react and stop in time if they brake suddenly.

Tailgating also makes the driver in front feel targeted and victimised, distracting their attention from the road ahead and making them more likely to make a mistake.

It is intimidating and frightening if you're on the receiving end. If that leads to a collision, then people in both vehicles could end up seriously injured or killed. We want everyone to travel safely, so the advice is – stay safe, stay back.

A host of companies have already backed the 'stay safe, stay back' campaign, including National Express, which is carrying the message on some of its long-distance coaches. Other advocates include the RAC, National Police Chiefs Council, leading road safety bodies Brake and the Institute for Advanced Motorists, and Thatcham.

Highways England has a dedicated [webpage](#) where drivers can find more information about tailgating and what they can do to stay safe.

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## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.