

News story: Environment Minister visits North America to turn tide on marine plastic

Minister Coffey and Canada's Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna. Photo Credit: Canadian High Commission.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey has joined forces with Canada and the USA in the fight against marine plastic.

During a visit to Washington D.C. and Ottawa this week, the Minister met her international counterparts to discuss the UK's priorities for the marine environment ahead of the G7 Environment meetings to be held later this year.

Like the UK, Canada has already banned microbeads in rinse-off cosmetics, and the Minister met the country's Environment and Climate Change Minister, Catherine McKenna, and Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, to look at how the two countries can unite in further tackling the threats facing our oceans.

Through its presidency of the G7, which includes a focus on climate change, oceans and clean energy, Canada will be pushing member states to take action to deal with plastic pollution, ocean acidification, and develop the blue economy.

Following her visit, the Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

There is no greater asset than our blue planet, and it is only by working together we can address the multitude of threats facing our marine life.

In the UK we have already banned microbeads and cracked down on plastic bags, and in 25 years' time we will have eliminated all avoidable plastic waste. I look forward to working with my international counterparts to do all we can to protect our oceans for future generations.

Minister McKenna and Minister Coffey also discussed the crucial role industry can play in turning the tide on plastic. And with businesses across the UK pledging to ban straws, cut plastic packaging and roll out water refills, the Minister met Mars and Coca Cola to see first-hand how big producers in the USA are tackling waste.

While in Washington D.C. the Minister also met Judy Garber, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary at the American Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, who was supportive of moving forward

work on oceans – especially on improved data and marine mapping.

Minister Coffey also used a meeting with stakeholders from Pew Environmental Trust and the High Seas Alliance as an opportunity to discuss improving biodiversity in the marine environment.

Press release: Residents invited to Holmwood drilling site drop-in event

The Environment Agency invites residents living near the Holmwood oil and gas exploratory site in Dorking, Surrey to a ‘drop-in’ event as part of its consultation on a permit application.

Visitors will be able to discuss the application and the process being followed to determine it, and talk to Environment Agency representatives about how they regulate oil and gas activities.

The event takes place at Dorking Halls (Martineau Hall), Reigate Road, Dorking RH4 1SG on Thursday 1 March, from 2pm to 7:30pm.

The consultation is open from 15 February to 15 March 2018 and follows an application by Europa Oil & Gas Limited for a bespoke environmental permit, which is currently being considered by the Environment Agency.

The application is for a bespoke environmental permit to drill a new well. Europa Oil & Gas Limited has also applied for permits to store oil on-site, and for the accumulation and disposal of radioactive waste from industrial activity. In deciding whether or not to issue the permits, the Environment Agency will take into account all relevant considerations and legal requirements.

Further information on the applications, a copy of the draft decision document and details of how to comment [can be found here](#).

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

This is a great opportunity for local people to find out more about the proposed operations at Holmwood and how the Environment Agency would regulate such activities.

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. Although we are minded to approve the applications for the bespoke and standard rules permit we are still in the determination process

and a final decision has not yet been made. We want to hear from the public and understand people's views on this application and to raise any concerns before we make any final decisions.

For further information, please email KSLE@environment-agency.gov.uk.

All media enquiries: call 0800 141 2743.

News story: Esmya: no new treatment courses prescribed until further notice

In December 2017, the European Medicines Agency started a review of Esmya (Ulipristal acetate) for uterine fibroids after it was reported that four cases of serious liver injury had occurred after its use. In three of the cases a liver transplant was needed.

As of February 2018, temporary safety measures have been introduced whilst the review is ongoing following a further case of serious liver injury requiring liver transplant.

The advice is that no new treatment courses should be prescribed until further notice. Those who are already taking Esmya or have recently stopped, it is advisable that they have blood tests to monitor their liver function at least once a month whilst taking the medicine. Treatment with Esmya will be stopped if these blood tests show signs of a possible problem.

If women experience symptoms associated with liver problems (nausea, vomiting, feeling ill, lack of appetite, weakness, upper abdominal pain, yellowing of the skin/eyes) then they must stop treatment and seek medical attention immediately.

Esmya is used to treat moderate to severe uterine fibroids in adult women who have not yet reached the menopause. It is normally taken for up to three months but the course can be repeated.

It's important to note that there are no concerns for individuals who have taken the emergency contraception ellaOne which also contains Ulipristal acetate. EllaOne is a single use medicine and as no cases of serious liver injury have been reported with its use to date there are currently no similar concerns with this medicine.

[News story: Cheshire motorway couple first to benefit from free double glazing](#)

Fred and June Glass from Frodsham have taken advantage of a Highways England initiative which will see the owners of more than 3,000 homes across the country being offered free noise insulation by spring 2020.

Mr and Mrs Glass moved into their home around two years ago and were contacted by Highways England contractors due to its location close to the motorway.

The stretch of the M56 near their home is used by over 124,000 vehicles every day, meaning they previously had to put up with constant traffic noise at all times of the day and night.

Now, thanks to the scheme, the noise levels in their lounge and bedroom are like a library, and ventilation units have also been fitted which allow air into the rooms without the windows needing to be opened.

Funding for the free noise insulation scheme is part of a £39 million special fund which Highways England is using to reduce noise levels for people living close to motorways and major A roads; it also includes installing noise barriers and low-noise road surfaces.

Mr Glass said:

We are delighted to have new double glazed windows and frames installed, free of charge, to help with reducing the noise levels.

The entire process has been really easy and the communication with Highways England's contractor, Forrest, and the care taken during the installation was superb.

We're really satisfied with the end result and have noticed a huge difference in day-to-day noise levels.

The scheme will usually involve upgrading windows, bi-folding doors and patio doors in bedrooms, living rooms, dining rooms and studies with double glazing as well as installing ventilation units.

Highways England has identified locations where new glazing will be the best solution for reducing noise levels, and the owners of some 3,000 eligible properties will be contacted over the next few months to be offered free windows and doors.

Ian Holmes, Principal Noise Advisor at Highways England, said:

Motorways are vital for connecting the country and supporting the economy but, at a local level, noise from the vehicles using them can affect people's health and wellbeing.

I'm delighted that Mr and Mrs Glass have noticed a significant reduction in the noise levels in their home, and look forward to bringing similar benefits to thousands of other residents.

Highways England has appointed Bolton-based construction company Forrest to carry out the first phase of its free noise insulation initiative.

Darroch Baker, Divisional Director at Forrest, said:

As a contractor with the ability to manage all aspects of this important scheme, including resident communication, property surveying and installation of the proposed improvements, we are thrilled to be appointed by Highways England.

The project is a great opportunity to contribute to improvements in the health and quality of life of the population most exposed to high traffic noise levels.

More details on the free noise insulation initiative are available on this [guidance page](#) on how to apply for noise insulation.

[News story: Plans outlined to extend 'settled status' deal to citizens from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway](#)

Plans to grant residents from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway similar rights post-Brexit as those from EU Member States, have been outlined this week as engagement between the UK and the EEA EFTA members intensifies.

Following on from the agreement reached in December to secure the rights of the 3 million EU citizens living in the UK and the 1 million UK citizens living in the 27 Member States, government officials have met with their EEA EFTA counterparts in order to extend the deal to each other's citizens.

The deal, which covers residency, healthcare, pensions, mutual recognition of professional qualifications and other benefits could be extended to the

18,000 Norwegian nationals, 2,000 Icelandic nationals and 40 Liechtenstein nationals living in the UK, and the 15,000 UK nationals in Norway, 800 in Iceland and 60 in Liechtenstein.

EEA EFTA citizens are covered by free movement provisions through the EEA EFTA states' membership of the EEA Agreement. This allows them to currently move to the UK and other EU states, and similarly UK citizens are currently able to move to the three EEA EFTA states.

Following their meeting earlier this week the UK and EEA EFTA countries issued the following joint-statement:

Officials from the EEA EFTA States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and the United Kingdom met on 12 February 2018 to discuss the agreement reached by the United Kingdom and the European Union on citizens' rights in December 2017. Positive discussions on these issues took place at the meeting and the parties affirmed their desire to secure the status and protect the rights of UK nationals living in Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein and nationals of those countries living in the UK.