

CMA action frees hundreds of homes from unlawful gas contracts

Press release

Hundreds of customers that buy domestic gas from BDS Fuels will be freed from unlawful exclusivity contracts.



- Over 700 households in the North West of England will now be freed from unlawful terms that locked them into repeat exclusivity contracts and restricted their ability to switch to a new gas provider.

The move by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) comes after concerns were raised about customers being automatically locked into new 'exclusivity contracts' for liquified petroleum gas (LPG) – an expensive domestic fuel used for heating and cooking by people who cannot access the UK mains gas grid. Customers were required to pay a £350 fee if they wished to break the contract and change providers. It is unlawful to automatically roll over these exclusivity contracts without customers' explicit agreement.

Having scrutinised BDS Fuels' contracts, the CMA found the firm had unlawfully used a clause that automatically renewed over 700 households' exclusivity contracts without their explicit consent. This meant hundreds of customers in Cumbria, North Lancashire, and North Yorkshire were unable to switch to a new provider – who may have been able to offer them a cheaper or better deal – without paying BDS a fee.

Following the CMA's intervention, BDS has now agreed to:

- Remove unlawful automatic renewal clauses from its LPG contracts
- Inform all existing customers who were automatically signed up to a new exclusivity contract that they can switch supplier with immediate effect and without paying a fee if they choose to
- Refund those customers who paid a fee to be released from their LPG contract early
- Provide information to customers annually that clearly details how they can cancel their contract and switch providers

Adam Land, Senior Director for Remedies, Business, and Financial Analysis at the CMA, said:

We are facing a cost-of-living crisis meaning it's more important than ever that people can shop around and choose the best possible deal for them. If we find evidence of businesses preventing this, we won't hesitate to step in – as we have with BDS Fuels.

The CMA will monitor BDS to make sure it is behaving in accordance with the Order and taking the action promised. Should it fail to do either of these, the CMA could step in and launch enforcement action.

For more information, please see the [CMA's Letter to BDS Fuels](#).

Notes to editors

1. According to BDS Fuels' website, the firm distributes to: Cumbria, North Lancashire, North Yorkshire, and South West Scottish Borders.
2. Liquefied Petroleum Gas is a domestic fuel used for cooking and heating. It is used in homes that are not on the mains gas grid and is stored in tanks on-site.
3. BDS Fuels breached the [Domestic Bulk Liquefied Petroleum Gas Market Investigation Order](#) (put in place by the CMA's predecessor The Competition Commission) in 2 ways, first, by failing to limit the exclusivity period in contracts to 24 months, and second, by failing to provide important information to 757 customers when providing them with contracts.
4. The CMA cannot currently impose financial penalties on businesses for breaches of this kind, but the UK Government has consulted on providing this power in the future. This power would allow the CMA to increase the deterrent effect of its enforcement and make sure businesses take the obligations which the CMA imposes on them seriously for the benefit of UK consumers.
5. All enquiries from journalists should be directed to the CMA press office by email on press@cma.gov.uk or by phone on 020 3738 6460.
6. All enquiries from the general public should be directed to the CMA's General Enquiries team on general.enquiries@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6000.

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[Minister for Armed Forces in Pakistan](#)

for two-day visit

Press release

The UK Minister for Armed Forces James Heapey MP is visiting Pakistan on a two-day visit to highlight the importance of Pakistan as a strategic partner to the UK and reiterate the long-standing deep people-to-people ties between the two countries. This year Pakistan and UK will be celebrating 75 years of partnership and bilateral ties.



Minister James Heapey will be meeting senior government and military leaders, discussing the impact of the war in Ukraine across the world and UK's humanitarian response in Afghanistan. He also laid a wreath at the War Cemetery in Rawalpindi where hundreds of Commonwealth soldiers who lost their lives in the two World Wars are laid to rest.

The last ministerial visit to Pakistan was in September when the then Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab held high-level meetings and discussed how the two countries can work closely together on the situation in Afghanistan.

James Heapey MP said:

The UK and Pakistan are close friends and partners. As we celebrate 75 years of our bilateral relationship, it is more important than ever that we continue to work together in an increasingly unstable world to tackle challenges and those who threaten global peace and security.

Notes to editors:

1. James Heapey was elected as the Member of Parliament for the Wells Constituency in May 2015. Before entering politics, James served in the Army reaching the rank of Major. In a 10 year career in the Rifles, James served on operations in Kabul in 2005, Northern Ireland in 2006, Basra in 2007 and Sangin in Helmand Province in 2009. He also served in Kenya and across the United Kingdom. James was appointed Minister for

Defence Procurement on 16 December 2019, having previously served as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Prime Minister.

2. The UK has now disbursed the full £286 million of UK aid for the financial year 2021-22 to Afghanistan and for Afghan refugees in the region to address the most urgent humanitarian needs.
3. On 31 March 2022, the UK co-hosted a high-level UN humanitarian pledging summit, alongside Germany and Qatar, that helped raised \$2.4 billion for the UN's Afghanistan appeal. This will reach millions of people with emergency support for health, protection, shelter, food, livelihood, and education. Some donors also announced funding for essential basic services, which will support the delivery of education, sustain health care systems, and support community resilience.
4. Ahead of the summit (on 30 March 2022), the Foreign Secretary announced the UK's pledge of £286 million of aid to Afghanistan for the financial year 2022-23.
5. UK aid allocated since October will support over 60 hospitals, provide health services for over 300,000 people; ensure 4.47 million people get emergency food assistance through the World Food Programme; and provide 6.1 million people with emergency health, water, protection, shelter, food, and education support through the UN Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund.

For further information:

please follow our social media channels:

Contact:
British High Commission
Islamabad
Tel: 0300 500 5306

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[UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce](#)

membership confirmed

Members of the UK's first Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce (UKSST) have been announced today (24 May).

The Taskforce will be Chaired by Captain Dr Paul Little, Principal & Chief Executive of City of Glasgow College. An academic leader with a successful part-time Maritime career that included deployment with the US Coastguard, Paul successfully transformed five UK tertiary institutions, and has a strong international reputation. Paul brings dynamic leadership to the Taskforce and over 40 years naval insight as a veteran Coastguard Officer, Younger Brother of Trinity House, Fellow of the Nautical Institute, Member of the UK's Merchant Navy Board and Member of both the Merchant Navy and the Royal Navy Associations. He is also a proud Honorary Royal Navy Captain.

He will be joined by 20 members from across the UK, providing coverage from industry including SMEs and larger organisations, training providers and trade representative bodies.

The Taskforce was announced in March 2022, as part of the cross-government [National Shipbuilding Strategy \(NSbS\)](#), to develop a world-leading skills strategy that will boost training and job opportunities in the shipbuilding industry particularly those related to new and emerging technologies and zero-emissions shipping.

Minister for Skills Alex Burghart said:

Making sure we can deliver more opportunities for people to train or upskill will be essential to providing the UK shipbuilding industry with the talent pipeline it needs to thrive and get more people into jobs.

I'm delighted to announce the appointment of Captain Dr Paul Little as the Chair of the UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce. I know he and all the other members will bring the experience, passion and understanding needed to make this Taskforce a success. I look forward to hearing about their work as the strategy develops.

Captain Dr Paul Little said:

I am honoured and delighted to be appointed as Chair of the UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce, as it will allow me to combine my lifelong passions for Skills and Maritime. Some of the very best and most famous ships throughout history were built in yards across the UK, by a talented workforce of naval architects, master technicians and skilled apprentices. I am therefore keen to get started with the first meeting of our highly experienced Taskforce to examine the existing and future shipbuilding skills supply chain

and to identify any additional upskilling and reskilling requirements. I look forward to working very closely with the National Shipbuilding Office, Civil & Military stakeholders, Colleges and Schools to deliver a renaissance in UK Shipbuilding.

The 20 members of the Taskforce are:

- Linton Roberts, Chief Technology Officer, Cammell Laird Ship repairers and Shipbuilders Ltd and A&P Group Ltd.
- Adrian Bevin, Head of Curriculum, Technology, South Devon College
- Commodore Andrew Martin Cree, Deputy Director Future Training, Royal Navy
- Edward James Corbett, Project Engineer, representing Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
- Elizabeth O'Connor, Human Resources and Legal Director, MJM Marine Ltd
- Hannah Prowse, CEO, Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust
- Keith Longman, Yard Manager, Berthon Boat Company Ltd.
- Kerrie Forster, CEO, Workboat Association
- Mark Whitehead, Snr Client and Commercial Manager, Bibby Marine
- Matt Bolton, Executive Officer, UKNEST
- Matthew Guy, Human Resources Director, Thales UK
- Nick Mansell, Chief Executive Officer, Intermarine UK
- Patrick Carnie, Strategy Director, Marine and Engineering Systems, Babcock International Group
- Paul Feely, Academy and Engineering Director, BAE Systems Naval
- Paul Turner, HR Director, Princess Yachts Ltd
- Rachel Kitley, Principal, Cowes Enterprise College, Ormiston Academies Trust (OAT)
- Richard Westgarth, Industry Engagement, BMT MarRI-UK, as well as Adjunct Professor at the Southampton Marine and Maritime Institute.
- Sarah Dhanda, Head of Policy and Partnerships, Enginuity
- Tahsin Tezdogan, University Reader in Naval Architecture, University of Strathclyde

The first meeting of the Taskforce is expected to take place in June, and members will soon begin working with the wider industry to explore skills needs and shortages.

Rear Admiral, Rex Cox, Chief Executive of the National Shipbuilding Office, said:

I am delighted that Paul Little has been appointed as Chair of the new UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce. As Principal and Chief Executive of the City of Glasgow College and with a rich maritime background, Paul is the ideal fit for the role. I am confident that Paul's appointment together with Taskforce membership drawn from right across the UK, and reflecting the true breadth of our Shipbuilding Enterprise, will bring real focus to skills and training.

The Taskforce will be critical in over-seeing our efforts to ensure that our industry is able to access workers with the right training and skills which is fundamental to our ambition to drive growth and transformation to achieve a globally successful, innovative and sustainable Shipbuilding Enterprise for the UK.

The [mailing list](#) remains open for anybody who would like to receive email updates or be part of our consultation group to help to shape the work of the Taskforce.

- The National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSbS) refresh builds on the commitments of the previous strategy and reaffirms the need for the shipbuilding industry to work together to understand and articulate their future skills needs.
- UK Shipbuilding Skills Taskforce (UKSST) will form a partnership between government, industry, training providers and trade representative bodies.
- The Taskforce will support the development and implementation of a future-focused skills strategy for shipbuilding. Working closely with the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Department for Transport (DfT), it will build a picture of the industry's skills needs and provide solutions to skills shortages, particularly those related to new and emerging technologies. By catalysing and leveraging the skills system, the Taskforce will:
 - ensure providers are empowered to meet the industry's requirements
 - work with industry colleagues to promote varied and exciting career opportunities in the shipbuilding sector
 - draw on the best practice internationally and from other sectors
 - optimise the available skills funding and opportunities for shipbuilding

Change of British High Commissioner to Belize: Ms Nicole Davison

Press release

Ms Nicole Davison has been appointed British High Commissioner to Belize in succession to Ms Claire Evans OBE.



Ms Nicole Davison has been appointed British High Commissioner to Belize in succession to Ms Claire Evans OBE who will be retiring from the Diplomatic Service. Ms Davison will take up her appointment during September 2022.

Full name: Nicole Davison

Partner: Karen Ferguson

Dates	Role
2016 to 2022	Vancouver, Consul General
2012 to 2016	Zagreb, Deputy Head of Mission
2009 to 2012	FCO, Team Leader, Global Response Centre
2007 to 2009	FCO, Deputy Head, Parliamentary Relations Department
2004 to 2007	Beijing, Her Majesty's Consul and Deputy Director Visa Services
2004	FCO, Full Time Language Training (Mandarin)
2001 to 2004	Kyiv, Second Secretary Political
2000 to 2001	FCO, Full Time Language Training (Ukrainian)
1999 to 2000	FCO, Desk Officer, Latin America & Caribbean Department
1996 to 1998	FCO, Desk Officer, Western European Department
1992 to 1995	Dhaka, Entry Clearance Officer
1990 to 1992	Cape Town/Pretoria, Registry Officer
1988 to 1990	FCO, Personnel Operations Department
1988	Joined FCO

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[Iconic Spaghetti Junction turns 50 and shows how to pasta test of time](#)

The junction – known as Gravelly Hill Interchange – carries more than 200,000 vehicles each day and forms part of the M6 travelling through the West Midlands. It also links traffic travelling in and out of Birmingham city

centre thanks to its seamless connection with the A38.

Originally designed for around 70,000 vehicles per day when the roads were much quieter, the elevated structure, maintained by National Highways, is a vital piece of infrastructure for the UK economy and continues to play a major part in helping freight and logistics companies move goods around the country.

The road is used by almost 26,000 lorries every day with more than 31,000 light good vehicles also using the junction and M6 for journeys.

National Highways Customer Services Director Melanie Clarke said:

Spaghetti Junction is a special part of England's motorway network. It's something to be proud of in Birmingham because it's known all around the world – quite rightly – as a feat of engineering.

When it was designed 50 years ago, nobody could have predicted that Gravelly Hill Interchange would carry around 200,000 vehicles every day.

As traffic levels have increased, so have our maintenance and safety regimes which play a vital role in helping keep the road safe for the tens of thousands of motorists that use our network every day. We know that it's used by nearly 26,000 hauliers every single day which goes to show the strategic importance of the route for businesses around the country.

It's also incredibly fitting that the 50th anniversary of the road opening coincides with Birmingham this year playing host to the 2022 Commonwealth Games. Spaghetti Junction will be pivotal in helping to connect athletes, sports enthusiasts and tourists with the city during the event.

Roads minister Baroness Vere said:

The Spaghetti Junction is both an iconic landmark and indispensable to the UK economy, providing essential links to the Midlands and beyond. Its longevity over the past 50 years is testament to all those who work to maintain it.

Head of Public Policy at Logistics UK Michelle Gardner said:

The Spaghetti Junction is a vital part of the strategic road network, helping logistics businesses to move goods efficiently throughout the West Midlands and beyond. The logistics industry relies on effective road infrastructure to support the UK economy and society; we are pleased to join National Highways in

celebrating the 50-year anniversary of this crucial junction.

Mayor of the West Midlands Andy Street said:

Spaghetti Junction has become an iconic Brummie landmark so it's only right that we celebrate its 50th anniversary.

At the time of its inception, it was actually considered a real engineering feat. So much so that my grandfather used to take me to visit whilst it was being built.

Over the years, it has played an important role in enabling goods, people and business to flow in and out of the region and will no doubt continue to do so for many years to come – not least in the year we play host to the Commonwealth Games.

The sprawling structure is known as the Gravelly Hill Interchange.

As part of the 50th anniversary celebrations, National Highways has teamed up with Glenn Howells Architects in Birmingham to restore the original architect's model which was built in the 1960s.

The project has been a labour of love for the practice's modelmakers who have painstakingly repaired the structure, upgraded with landscaping and greenery and enclosed it into a conference table.

National Highways plans to take the model to various education establishments to help encourage youngsters to think about the world of engineering.

The refurbished model of Spaghetti Junction will be used as part of a school's engagement programme to encourage young people to think about engineering

Glenn Howells Architects Head of Modelshop Pierre Greenway said:

We didn't want to change the model so much as you wouldn't see the original any longer. We wanted the viewer to be able to see the original model while updating it to the modern day.

The model shows the sheer scale of the structure and it's wonderful to be able to play a part in restoring this piece of work for the future and encourage youngsters to think about the world of engineering and construction.

To mark the occasion, Heinz has also created a limited edition set of 500

tins commemorating Spaghetti Junction.

Did you know?

- It is the interchange of the M6, A38, A38 (M) connecting Birmingham and the M6.
- The sprawling design of Spaghetti Junction means there are more than 250 spans, crossbeams and expansion joints, more than 600 columns and more than 3,000 bridge bearings.
- The slip roads are around 2.5 miles long with the M6 itself less than a mile at the structure.
- The Birmingham Evening Mail described the road as a “cross between a plate of spaghetti and an unsuccessful attempt at a Staffordshire knot” coining the phrase ‘Spaghetti Junction’.
- It costs around £7m every year to maintain the structure and keep it in a safe and serviceable condition
- It was designed by engineer Sir Evan Owen Williams.
- Work started to build the road in 1968.
- It took four years to complete and is subject to regular maintenance programmes, many of which take place underneath the road.
- The highest point of the structure is circa 80ft in the air.
- The site covers around 30 acres with teams walking an average of 12-15 miles a day during inspections
- Spaghetti Junction continues to hold international acclaim having formed the backdrop for filming for Ready Player One, with some scenes filmed underneath the structure. The towering concrete columns formed the ideal backdrop to the film, which was in cinemas in 2018.
- For the filming, special templates featuring graffiti were stuck to the concrete structures and various props added into the set, including cars and tyres, with a ‘camp’ constructed for the new film.
- The film crew took considerable effort to protect the structure and ensure nothing was damaged during filming.

General enquiries

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

Media enquiries

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