

In-depth Veolia-Suez merger review finds competition concerns

This loss of competition could then lead to more costly and lower quality services, and in turn to higher council tax bills, as local councils and some businesses would have less choice when procuring key waste and water management services.

Veolia and Suez are 2 of the largest suppliers of waste management services to councils and businesses in the UK. Both companies are active across the waste management supply chain – from the collection of waste to the operation of facilities for composting and incineration, to landfill sites. The companies also supply water and wastewater management services to industrial customers.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) launched an inquiry into the deal in October 2021 and it was referred for an in-depth Phase 2 investigation, which is led by an independent inquiry group, in December 2021.

The CMA's investigation is focussing on 8 markets within the waste and water management sector in which the 2 companies currently compete. In carrying out its assessment, the CMA has taken into account that Veolia and Suez, which are the only suppliers in the UK who are active across the entire waste management chain, are 2 of the few companies that are able to service the largest and most complex waste management contracts with councils.

The CMA's in-depth investigation has considered a wide range of evidence, including a number of concerns raised by customers and other market participants.

The CMA has provisionally found that the merger raises competition concerns in seven of the 8 markets within the waste and water management sector on which its in-depth investigation has focussed. In each of these markets, the merging businesses currently compete closely and would face limited competition after the merger. The CMA is concerned that this would result in higher cost or lower quality services for councils, with knock-on effects for taxpayers, as well as businesses across the UK.

Stuart McIntosh, Chair of the CMA inquiry group, said:

We all use waste and recycling services in some way, so it's vital that these markets are competitive and provide good value for money. This is all the more important at a time when local authority budgets are already stretched and waste management services have to evolve to help achieve Net Zero targets.

We've heard from a number of customers, including local authorities, who are concerned that this merger could reduce competition in markets where choice is already limited, leading to

higher prices or poorer services.

We share those concerns and want to make sure that commercial customers and councils don't get a worse deal – leaving taxpayers to foot the bill at a time when household budgets are already under huge pressure.

The CMA welcomes responses from interested parties to its provisional findings by 9 June 2022 and its notice of possible remedies, which sets out potential options for addressing its provisional concerns, by 2 June 2022. These will be considered ahead of the CMA issuing its final report, which is due by 17 July 2022.

For more information, visit the [Veolia / Suez merger inquiry page](#).

For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.

The CMA provisionally found that the anticipated merger would lead to Substantial Lessening of Competition (SLC) in the following areas:

- collection of non-hazardous waste for municipal customers
- operation and maintenance services for sorting of waste for municipal customers
- operation and maintenance of Energy Recovery facilities (ie incineration) for municipal customers
- supply of incineration services for customers in 2 local areas
- collection of non-hazardous waste for commercial and industrial customers
- operation and maintenance services for water and wastewater treatment facilities to industrial customers
- provision of mobile water services to industrial customers

[England Coast Path takes a step forward as Shoreham-by-Sea to Eastbourne stretch is officially open](#)

- The 33-mile (53 kilometre) route from Shoreham-by-Sea to Eastbourne, linking west to east Sussex, is the first complete section of the England Coast Path in Sussex to open.
- This new stretch, the 17th full stretch to open, will form part of the 2,700-mile-long England Coast Path, which will become the longest

walking route in the world.

- The route includes coastal towns, stunning sea views with the iconic back-drop of the white chalk cliffs, and rural landscapes created by the South Downs meeting the sea.

Spring has sprung with a new trail for Sussex residents and visitors to enjoy. The new section of the England Coast Path will help connect people with nature, and provides a wealth of health and wellbeing opportunities.

The easy to follow 33-mile (53 kilometre) walking route, which includes part of the South Downs National Park, along the west and east Sussex coast and passing seaside promenades and nature reserves, has been opened by Natural England today.

This route will eventually help connect the country's entire coastline into one long trail. The walk will take people through some of the finest landscapes in England, as well as the many coastal towns, cities and ports that have shaped this island nation. And for the first time in the history of footpaths, legal rights of public access will be secured to typical coastal land including beaches, dunes and cliffs, allowing walkers to access places they've never been before.

Jim Seymour, Natural England Area Manager said:

This trail encompasses the iconic white chalk cliff and sea views, the South Downs National Park with its abundance of wildlife, and the popular coastal towns.

At a time when the benefits of connecting with nature are clearer than ever, it's fabulous that we are opening up this 33-mile-long section of footpath across the South Downs and along the east and west Sussex coast.

I have personally felt the value of walking a section of this route recently with my family, and I look forward to exploring more of this new route, now that it's open, on my next trip.

This new trail covers a wealth of unique environments. Setting off from Shoreham-by-Sea, you cross the River Adur estuary. Here migratory wading birds and waterfowl can be seen on the saltmarsh and mud flats. Other sights include the old lighthouse in Shoreham Harbour with views of its maritime use, including unique houseboats, traditional boat yards and large commercial ships as they pass through Shoreham Port.

The trail leads onto Hove Esplanade en-route to Brighton, where remains of West Pier can be spotted and the Brighton i360 viewing tower – the tallest structure in Sussex – can be seen. Walk along the bustling promenade on Brighton seafront up to Palace Pier then past Brighton Marina. Here you can

follow the Undercliff Walk as far as Saltdean (there is also the option to take the clifftop route here).

Once reaching Saltdean chalk clifftop, the walk leads you to Peacehaven and on to Newhaven. In Newhaven, you can visit several nature reserves, including Castle Hill Local Nature Reserve and Ouse Estuary Nature Reserve. Look out for a host of wildlife including migratory and nesting birds such as lesser whitethroat and fulmars, wildflowers including birds' foot trefoil and thrift, and plenty of butterflies and insects.

There are also historical sites to see in Newhaven, including WWII gun emplacements and the 19th century Newhaven Fort. By the harbour, the quayside promenade offers great views of the fishing and leisure boats and the large Newhaven-Dieppe ferries that dock here.

Eastwards from Newhaven, the trail goes firstly around low-lying Seaford Bay including Tide Mills to Seaford esplanade, before reaching the Sussex Heritage Coast at Seaford Head. This famous and well-known stretch of coastline along the Sussex coast includes the iconic chalk cliffs of Seaford Head, Seven Sisters and Beachy Head, where the South Downs National Park meets the sea.

On this path you pass Cuckmere Haven, which is a popular visitor location for walkers, dog walking, bird watching, visiting the beach and for photography, as there are amazing views of the Seven Sisters chalk cliffs and Cuckmere River meanders.

On the eastern side of the Cuckmere River estuary is the Seven Sisters Country Park at Exceat, where the England Coast Path joins the existing South Downs Way National Trail. This follows the clifftop footpath along the Seven Sisters, Birling Gap, Belle Tout, Beachy Head and Eastbourne.

Beachy Head is another internationally famous site for both locals and visitors, with glorious views both seawards along the coast towards Hastings and on a clear day towards Dungeness and inland across the South Downs to Firle Beacon.

This stretch of the England Coast Path ends at Eastbourne Pier, where you can walk along the promenade by the sea in this popular coastal town.

Andy Le Gresley, South East National Trail Partnership Chair said:

This new 33-mile stretch of the England Coast Path is fantastic news for visitors to the beautiful and varied Sussex coastline.

The trail links several iconic Sussex locations with a high-quality, well-signposted walking route. Walkers can enjoy a unique variety of urban and countryside coastlines, and a mix of different terrains and views – from steep hills to easy promenades.

This new stretch of trail is also a vital link in the South East section of the England Coast Path. Once complete, the whole of the

South East Coast Path will provide a new route for walkers, running from Shoreham-by Sea to the London Borough of Bexley.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank local authority access officers and Natural England staff for their years of hard work and dedication to design, negotiate and create this excellent new section of Coast Path.

You can find images for sections of the stretch [here](#).

The 33-mile (53-kilometre) route will become part of the [England Coast Path](#) – the 2,700-mile, long-distance walking route and England's newest National Trail currently being developed around the entire English coast by Natural England.

Natural England worked on the Shoreham-by-Sea to Eastbourne stretch with a wide range of partners and landowners: Adur District Council, Shoreham Port Authority, West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove City Council and the South Downs National Park Authority.

Our proposals were submitted to government in September 2018 and were approved in December 2019.

The stretch is easily accessed via public transport and there are plenty of locations along the trail for refreshments and with accommodation.

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 places a duty on the Secretary of State and Natural England to secure a long-distance walking trail around the open coast of England, together with public access rights to a wider area of land along the way for people to enjoy. Natural England is working on the entire coastal route. A map showing a timetable for the work is here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-coast-path-overview-of-progress.

As well as new sections of trail, there are improvements to existing access along the coastline that:

- identify a clear and continuous way-marked walking route along this part of the coast, bringing some sections of the existing coastal footpath closer to the sea and linking some places together for the first time
- allow the route to 'roll back' if the coastline erodes, shifts or slips, solving the long-standing difficulties of maintaining a continuous route along the coast

For more information, visit

www.gov.uk/government/collections/england-coast-path-improving-public-access-to-the-coast and www.nationaltrail.co.uk/.

The [Countryside Code](#), recently updated, is the official guide on how to enjoy nature and treat both it, and the people who live and work there, with respect.

Find out more about the this stretch of the England Coast Path and Natural

England on our social media channels: <https://twitter.com/naturalengland> (@NaturalEngland), <https://twitter.com/NESussexandKent> (@NESussexandKent) www.instagram.com/naturalengland/, <https://www.facebook.com/naturalengland>.

[Attorney General to set out the UK's position on cybersecurity and international law](#)

News story

The Attorney General will tonight set out more detail on the UK's position on applying international law to cyberspace.



The Attorney General the Rt Hon Suella Braverman QC MP will tonight set out more detail on the UK's position on applying international law to cyberspace in a speech at Chatham House. The Attorney will say that the united international response to the illegal invasion of Ukraine has illustrated the need to have a clear framework for cybersecurity that makes clear when State action is unlawful.

The Attorney will stress that cyberspace is not lawless. The Attorney will argue that a cyber-attack should be treated the same as physical attack and that states must lead the debate on what they see as the 'rules of the road'.

The Attorney will set out the UK's view on what constitutes unlawful cyber behaviour. This will enable the UK and others to better 'call out' unlawful behaviour and give clarity on what action can lawfully be taken in response to a cyber-attack.

The Attorney will say that the threat from cyber-attacks is real, and disruptive state cyber behaviour has caused chaos across the world. Recently, before its illegal invasion of Ukraine, Russia targeted destructive malware against hundreds of systems across Ukraine affecting its IT, energy, and

financial sectors.

The Attorney General will say:

The United Kingdom's aim is to ensure that future frontiers evolve in a way that reflects our democratic values and interests and those of our allies.

The law needs to be clear and well understood if it is to be part of a framework for governing international relations and to rein in irresponsible cyber behaviour. Setting out more detail on what constitutes unlawful activity by States will bring greater clarity about when certain types of robust measures are justified in response.

Note to Editors

1. The UK is a leading voice on cyber at an international level. Online safety and cyber security has featured in discussions among counterparts in the 'Quintet' of Attorneys General from the UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States.
2. Examples of cyber-attacks where the UK has 'named and shamed' state actors are:
 1. On 10 May 2022 the UK (along with EU, US and other allies) announced that Russia was responsible for a series of cyber-attacks since the renewed invasion of Ukraine.
 2. In July 2021 the UK assessed that Chinese state-backed actors were responsible for gaining access to computer networks around the world via Microsoft Exchange servers. The attacks took place in early 2021 and open-source reporting indicates that at least 30,000 organisations were compromised in the US alone, with many more affected worldwide.
 3. The UK and US revealed in April 2021 that Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) was behind a series of cyber intrusions, including the SolarWinds compromise. These incidents were part of a wider pattern of cyber intrusions by the SVR who have previously attempted to gain access to governments across Europe and NATO members.
 4. In October 2020 the UK exposed malicious cyber activity from Russia's GRU military intelligence service against organisations involved in the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games before they were postponed.
 5. The 2017 NotPetya cyber-attack, which masqueraded as ransomware, affected Ukraine's financial, energy and government institutions. Statements of attribution and support were issued by the UK along with the US, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, Sweden, Estonia, the Netherlands and Denmark amongst others.
 6. In December 2017 the UK attributed the Wannacry ransomware incident (which included NHS email systems among its targets) to North Korean actors. UK attribution was done in parallel to allies

including the US, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Denmark and Japan.

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[New 'super' National Nature Reserve created to protect rare wildlife](#)

A vast new 'super nature reserve', spanning large parts of Somerset and encompassing some of the country's most precious habitats, has been created today (19th May).

The declaration of the new Somerset Wetlands 'super' National Nature Reserve (NNR) by Natural England and partners will protect 6,140 hectares of precious saltmarsh, heath and wetland habitats, home to nationally significant wildlife populations.

The area is a stronghold for many different species of wetland and ground nesting birds like the Skylark, Bittern and Avocet. It is also a significant site for a huge variety of insects such as the hairy dragonfly, silver diving beetle and the raft spider – the second largest spider in the UK.

With the increasing need for a bigger, better and more joined-up approach to nature conservation, today's announcement is an important moment for nature recovery. The site will knit together a total of six nature reserves and other nature managed land in the Somerset Levels, Coast and Moors and will join England's developing Nature Recovery Network.

Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England, said:

The creation of this very large National Nature Reserve is an important moment for Nature recovery in England. This is not least because it presents a practical demonstration of what can be done by working in partnership across the landscape at scale to reverse Nature's decline. Natural England intends to encourage other projects with similar ambition.

Seventy years from the creation of our first National Nature Reserves in England these wonderful places are needed now more than ever, as we face into the challenges of global warming, wildlife decline and reconnecting people with the natural world.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

Today is a landmark moment for nature recovery in Somerset. A new super National Nature Reserve will not only protect wildlife and help tackle climate change by restoring peatlands and improving habitats, it will provide people with greater opportunities to visit these beautiful wetlands with consequent spin offs that will benefit the local economy too.

And crucially, this vast project will play an important part in reversing the decline in nature through our Nature Recovery Network, as set out in our ambitious Environment Act.

Rosie Hails, Director of Nature and Science at the National Trust, said:

The huge challenge posed by the twin climate and nature crises is such that ambitious solutions are urgently needed at scale. The launch of a new Super National Nature Reserve represents a significant step forward in working across boundaries to address the most pressing environmental issues while, crucially, bringing nature closer to people.

We're proud to care for national nature reserves across the country, and the making of a new 'Super' reserve is a fitting way to mark 70 years since the first designation. Today, the creation and protection of space for wildlife to thrive couldn't be more important.

Craig Bennett, Chief Executive, The Wildlife Trusts said:

Working across whole landscapes is essential to tackling the twin nature and climate crises. Super National Nature Reserves provide a great opportunity to engage a wide range of people, including private landowners, to tackle some of the issues affecting our nature reserves that need action to be taken at a landscape scale.

If we are to achieve nature's recovery, we need to create and restore wild places across the countryside, giving wildlife the chance it so desperately needs to spread and thrive. Natural solutions such wetlands and peat bogs which store carbon are crucial for a healthier future. From booming bittern to red squirrels, wildflower-rich meadows and dramatic coastlines, we're proud that Wildlife Trusts in England care for a massive 53 National Nature Reserves – arguably our best places for people to enjoy nature.

We welcome today's announcement which we hope will enable more strategic management of land for wildlife, and we're looking forward to celebrating the Festival of National Nature Reserves.

The announcement today demonstrates how the Government is delivering on the Environment Act – a key target laid out in Act is to halt the decline in our wildlife populations through a legally binding target for species abundance by 2030.

The local tourism industry and residents are also set to benefit from this declaration, which will provide more people with access to nature by making it easier for residents of local towns such as Bridgwater and Glastonbury to access the sites, as well as improving the health and wellbeing of the local community and provide economic benefits through developing wildlife tourism opportunities.

The declaration today is at the centre of celebrations for the 70th anniversary of the creation of England's first nature reserve on 19 May 1952. Today there are 219 sites, spanning 101,531ha. These 'nature hotspots' are key to restoring nature across England and helping to bring green space and wildlife to everyone, including those who live in towns and cities.

There will be a 'Festival of Nature Reserves' this summer to celebrate with a programme of events at nature reserves. To find out more about the festival and how to get involved in events across the country, visit <http://www.nnrfestival.com/>

Community to rescue pubs, clubs and farms backed by £2.2 million government funding

- Eight more projects set to benefit from the government's Community Ownership Fund
- Pubs, historic buildings and sports facilities included in projects to be taken over by community groups
- Part of wider £150 million funding package to level up communities by empowering them to take ownership of local landmarks

A boxing club, historic pub and city farm are among eight community projects across England and Northern Ireland set to be rescued by more than £2.2 million of government levelling up funding.

These grants will help community groups take control of venues in their area that are at risk of being lost forever and transform them into vibrant hubs for the benefit of local people.

This is all part of the government's drive to level up local communities across the country, create more jobs for local people, boost local businesses

and build up local economies as a result.

Projects include the Victoria House in Oldham, built in 1874, which will be turned from a derelict hall into a boxing and personal development centre, offering support for vulnerable young people as well as fitness and wellbeing opportunities for all. Without this funding, the centre would have been forced to move.

Spaces within The Grade II listed Granville Hotel, designed by one of Ramsgate's most famous residents EW Pugin, will also be saved from decay and restored to help protect the Kent town's heritage. Funding will renovate the bar and restaurant area, reviving the seafront venue and creating a new space for artists, start-ups and local businesses.

The family-run Old Red Lion theatre pub, one of London's oldest pubs, said to have been founded in 1415, is set to receive funding. The pub has a long history as a cultural bright spot in the local area and with this funding it will be relaunched as an arts venue and space for community work.

Minister for Levelling Up, the Union and Constitution, Neil O'Brien MP said:

From bringing historic buildings back to life in Ramsgate to creating a community farm in the centre of Bristol, the Community Ownership Fund enables local people to take on projects that benefit their communities and save venues that would otherwise be lost forever.

Through this fund we are empowering local people, restoring their pride in the places where they live and levelling up communities across the United Kingdom.

The fund is already helping communities across the country seize ownership of prized local assets that are at risk, including the [UK's most remote pub](#) in Scotland and [Gigg Lane](#), home of Bury FC.

The first round of successful projects was announced at the Spending Review in autumn last year. Applications to bid for round 2 of funding through the Community Ownership Fund will open in June this year.

The eight vibrant and exciting projects being funded through this latest tranche of Community Ownership Fund grant are:

- a community in Yorkshire taking ownership of the Countryman's Inn pub
- one of London's oldest pubs, the Old Red Lion in Islington relaunching its theatre pub venue
- the Oxford Arms pub in Herefordshire transforming into a vibrant community hub
- regenerating 30 acres of land at Hartcliffe City Farm in Bristol to benefit the local community
- a historic church in Somerset providing a community arts and social centre

- a boxing and development centre in Oldham, which aims to support young people and families
- Pugin's heritage building being restored into a vibrant community place for local people to enjoy stunning views which dining by the marina
- in Northern Ireland the regeneration of St Columb's Hall creating a community centre in the heart of Derry-Londonderry

See the full list of [successful bids](#)