

[News story: CMA reviews FirstGroup bus undertakings in Bristol](#)

From:

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The CMA is to review long-standing undertakings covering FirstGroup and local authority tendered bus services in the Greater Bristol area.

The undertakings followed the 1989 merger of local bus companies Badgerline and Midland Red West which was investigated by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC). The MMC ruled that the merger would remove competition for bus services contracted by the former Avon County Council. Local authorities tender for – and subsidise – unprofitable bus services in order to maintain important transport links for residents.

The merged company was therefore required to sign up to a number of restrictions, including a cap on the amount they could receive from the local authority for running a tendered service – and a requirement to return any excess profit from such services.

These undertakings were amended in 1996 following a subsequent bus merger where both operators became part of FirstGroup.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has now decided to review the undertakings to see if there has been a change in circumstances which justifies their removal or variation.

The CMA is seeking views in particular from local authorities, bus operators and bodies representing bus passengers in the Greater Bristol area. It wants to hear about whether the ability of local authorities to attract competitive bids has changed in the intervening years, whether the growth of other operators has increased competition for tendered bus services and the practical impact of the undertakings.

Responses are invited via the review [case page](#).

The CMA has also today published its [final advice](#) to the secretary of state recommending the removal of remedies in 2 merger cases that followed investigations carried out under the Fair Trading Act.

Today's actions result from the CMA's ongoing programme of work on remedy reviews, initially set out in the CMA's [2015/16 annual plan](#), with the aim of reducing burdens on business by assessing whether past merger and market remedies should be removed or varied when they are no longer necessary. Since its creation in 2014, the CMA has launched 96 remedy reviews, around two-

thirds of which have resulted in the removal of the remedy.

For more information see the [remedies review case page](#).

[Press release: Thousands officially pardoned under 'Turing's Law'](#)

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Thousands of gay and bisexual men convicted of now abolished sexual offences have today been posthumously pardoned.

The historic moment comes after the Policing and Crime Bill today (31 January 2017) received Royal Assent – enshrining, in law, pardons for those convicted of consensual same-sex relationships.

The new law, made possible following government intervention, will also see statutory pardons granted to the living. However, this will only apply in cases where offenders have successfully applied through the Home Office's disregard process to have historic convictions removed.

Justice Minister Sam Gyimah said:

This is a truly momentous day. We can never undo the hurt caused, but we have apologised and taken action to right these wrongs.

I am immensely proud that 'Turing's Law' has become a reality under this government.

'Turing's law' has been a longstanding government commitment, in order to build on the case of World War II hero and Enigma codebreaker Alan Turing.

Turing, who committed suicide in 1954 following his conviction for gross indecency, was posthumously pardoned by Her Majesty the Queen in 2013.

Notes to editors

- The new law was made possible through amendments to the Policing and Crime Bill which received Royal Assent today.
- The amendments were first tabled by Lord Sharkey, Lord Cashman and Lord

Lexden with government support.

- As well as posthumously pardoning gay and bisexual men, this law will also provide pardons for the living in cases where convictions have been deleted through the disregard process. This will ensure that due diligence is carried out and prevent people from claiming to be cleared of offences that are still crimes – including sex with a minor and non-consensual sexual activity.
- For example, under the disregard process, the Home Office has rejected several applications where the activity was non-consensual and others where the other party was under 16-years-old.
- An applicant is only eligible for a ‘disregard’ if the Secretary of State decides that it appears that the other person involved in the conduct which constituted the offence consented to it and was aged 16 or over at the time, and that the conduct would not now constitute the offence of sexual activity in a public lavatory. In other words, the Secretary of State must be satisfied that the conduct is no longer criminal.
- The new law mirrors both the existing disregard process and the new pardon arrangements in Northern Ireland.
- For more information call the MOJ press office on 020 3334 3503 or 020 3334 3529

[Guidance: Algal blooms: advice for the public and landowners](#)

Algae naturally occur in inland waters, estuaries and the sea. Blooms can form when their numbers become excessive. This guide describes the features of algal blooms, how they can affect you and what you should do if you see one.

[News story: Policing and Crime Bill receives Royal Assent](#)

The government marked a major milestone in its police reform agenda today (Tuesday, 31 January) as the Policing and Crime Bill received Royal Assent.

The [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#) will enhance the democratic accountability of police forces and fire and rescue services, improve the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency services through closer collaboration, and build

public confidence in policing.

It will strengthen the protections for persons under investigation by, or who come into contact with, the police; ensure that the police and other law enforcement agencies have the powers they need to prevent, detect and investigate crime; and further safeguard children and young people from sexual exploitation.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

This act is another major milestone in our far-reaching police reforms over recent years.

The measures in the act give greater protections for the vulnerable, ensure the police have the necessary powers to keep our communities safe, and overhaul the police complaints and disciplinary systems to increase accountability and improve police integrity.

We have also sought to ensure forces have the right people and skills to cope with the changing nature of crime, improve efficiency and effectiveness of our emergency services through greater collaboration and end the injustice of individuals spending extended periods on pre-charge bail.

I look forward to continuing to work with the police and stakeholders as the measures in the act are implemented.

The act includes provisions which will:

- reform pre-charge bail to put a stop to people remaining on bail for lengthy periods with no independent judicial scrutiny of its continued necessity
- better enable chief officers to make the most efficient and effective use of their workforce by giving them the flexibility to confer a wider range of powers on police staff and volunteers (whilst for the first time specifying a core list of powers that may only be exercised by warranted police officers) and conferring a power on the Home Secretary to specify police ranks in regulations, thereby affording the flexibility to introduce a flatter rank structure
- place a new duty on police, fire and rescue and emergency ambulance services to collaborate where it is in the interests of their efficiency or effectiveness and enable police and crime commissioners (PCCs) to take on responsibility for the governance of fire and rescue services, where a local case is made
- improve the response to those in mental health crisis – including stopping those under 18 from being detained in a police station – and restricting such detention for adults – by reforming police powers under sections 135 and 136 of the [Mental Health Act 1983](#)
- reform the police disciplinary and complaints systems to ensure that the public have confidence in their ability to hold the police to account,

- and that police officers will uphold the highest standards of integrity
- increase in the maximum sentence for stalking involving fear of violence from five to ten years' imprisonment
 - amend the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(PACE\)](#), including to ensure that 17-year-olds who are detained in police custody are treated as children for all purposes, and to facilitate the increased use of video link technology
 - amend the firearms acts to better protect the public by closing loopholes that can be exploited by criminals and terrorists, and by issuing statutory guidance to ensure that the robust processes we have in place for assessing suitability to hold a firearms certificate are applied consistently
 - confer pardons, subject to conditions, for individuals living or deceased who were convicted of now abolished gay sex offences
 - improve protection for victims of forced marriage and give them more confidence to come forward by providing them with lifelong anonymity

Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, Brandon Lewis, said:

Police reform is working and crimes traditionally measured by the survey have fallen by a third since 2010 to a record low.

I am delighted this act has now received Royal Assent and, in close collaboration with police and fire stakeholders, we will work hard to implement the act's provisions to further improve the effectiveness and accountability of our emergency services.

Read [more information on the Policing and Crime Act](#).

Admiral Sunil Lanba, PVSM, AVSM, ADC Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) and Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) visits ANC

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