

Second consultation on Alton environmental permit variation

The Environment Agency is holding its second public consultation on an environmental permit variation application from waste operator, Veolia ES Hampshire Limited.

From Friday 7 January until midnight on 18 February 2022, communities can comment online via the consultation portal – Citizen Space.

Veolia ES Hampshire Limited applied to the Environment Agency to vary their existing Alton Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) environmental permit, to allow the operation of a proposed advanced energy recovery facility, often referred to as an incinerator, near Alton in Hampshire.

The first consultation to seek public views took place last year. Since then, the Environment Agency has considered all the relevant comments received in response to the consultation and summarised in a draft decision document.

Colin Chiverton, area environment manager at the Environment Agency, said: > We have decided that the application has provided sufficient information for us to determine that the facility will not cause harm to the environment or people's health. > There is now the opportunity for members of the public to examine and make comments on our draft decision document and the conditions we are 'minded to' include in the draft variation notice. We will review these comments to ensure that we consider all relevant issues raised before making our final decision.

The Environment Agency is looking specifically for environmental or health considerations from members of the public – as the request from the operator is a significant variation to the existing Alton MRF permit for the proposed Advanced Energy Recovery Facility.

The proposed facility would be capable of treating around 330,000 tonnes of non-recyclable non-hazardous waste each year from homes and businesses across Hampshire and its neighbouring counties.

Colin Chiverton added:

You can comment on issues that could affect you or where you have particular local knowledge. We take all relevant comments into account so we can make better decisions. > Should the permit variation be granted, specialist Environment Agency officers will regularly audit the operation, including analysing monitoring data, and will also conduct unannounced inspections.

The consultation runs from 7 January until midnight on 18 February 2022. The draft decision document and draft variation notice can be viewed online at: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/psc/gu34-4jd-veolia-es-hampshire-limited>

Comments can be made online at the above webpage or they can be emailed to us at pscpublicresponse@environment-agency.gov.uk

If you are unable to access the application online please call our National Customer Contact Centre on 03708 506 506 who will be able to help you between 9am-6pm Monday- Friday.

National Highways announce new environmental sustainability division as it targets net zero

The new division, headed by Stephen Elderkin, will work with National Highways' executive directors and board to deliver the ambitious plan to cut carbon emissions to net zero across England's motorways and major A-roads by 2050.

Bringing together National Highways' environmental teams and a new carbon team into one central division, it will raise the profile of environment within the organisation and create additional capacity and capability on this vital subject.

As well as driving towards net zero, the division of 50 people will also develop National Highways' new environmental strategy – a key theme that will be central to any future road investment strategies.

Stephen brings to the position extensive experience from both major project delivery and economic and chief analyst roles. He's moving into the new post having led the £1bn A12 upgrade scheme for the last 3 years.

His career prior to joining National Highways focussed on environmental sustainability, including working for the Department of Energy and Climate Change and Defra. His roles included leading the Government analysis for the Climate Change Act, carbon budgets and energy efficiency policies.

Stephen said:

It's a privilege to take on this role at such a critical time. We've seen how COP26 has brought heightened public recognition of the need for action on climate change.

National Highways connects the country, playing a vital role in national prosperity. But we must do that sustainably, making our contribution to achieving a net zero economy and showing ambition and leadership to leave a positive legacy through our approach to

the environment.

The challenge to us and the industry is to demonstrate how we are delivering improved environment outcomes; rapidly decarbonising transport and supporting biodiversity to create the cleaner, greener network a zero carbon Britain needs.

The environmental challenges we face can only be achieved by working together – I look forward to working with our supply chain partners and stakeholders to achieve our ambitious goals.

Moving forward, the division will have several key objectives, including:

- implementing the net zero plan; achieving net zero for corporate emissions by 2030, net zero for construction and maintenance emissions by 2040 and net zero for road user emissions by 2050
- developing the long-term vision for an environmentally sustainable National Highways and a strategy to get there
- enhancing biodiversity
- reducing local environmental impacts from our network

Mike Wilson, Executive Director, Safety Engineering and Standards, said:

We're committed to our ambitious vision of net zero by 2050 but recognise the scale of the challenge that faces us.

Being able to call on someone with Stephen's experience will make a real difference in our capability to deliver that promise.

Our net zero carbon plan and the new division will put roads at the heart of the low carbon economy, while preserving the convenience and economic benefit of an efficient road network.

The Government-owned company has already started sustained action towards decarbonising England's motorways and A-roads so they can continue to bring significant benefits to motorists, communities and businesses in a net-zero future.

The plan will put roads at the heart of Britain's net zero future through three key commitments; achieving net zero for its own operations by 2030; delivering net zero road maintenance and construction by 2040; and supporting net zero carbon travel on our roads by 2050.

[Read the full net zero plan.](#)

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.

[New Air Traffic system operational with 300 UK jobs supported](#)

- £1.5 billion contract transforming Air Traffic Management for UK Armed Forces
- RAF Shawbury first to benefit from cutting-edge technology
- More than 300 jobs supported through the programme, with 150 of those in Fareham, Hampshire

Designed to ensure safe and resilient military flying operations, the contract will integrate and support modern, innovative equipment with existing infrastructure. Variations will be rolled out across more than 60 Ministry of Defence sites in the UK and overseas by 2024, including Cyprus, Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands.

The equipment allows controllers improved situational awareness enhancing flight safety, with digital upgrades including touch screen communications, clearer radar pictures and improved flight information and positioning – all of which will be available on upgraded controller consoles.

Around 300 jobs have been secured in Fareham and other areas of the UK since the contract was awarded to Aquila Air Traffic Management Services Ltd in 2014 – a joint venture between Thales and National Air Traffic Services.

Minister for Defence Procurement, Jeremy Quin, said:

Ensuring our drones, fighter jets, helicopters and cargo aircraft operate safely and efficiently is critical to maintaining our capabilities and supporting our service personnel. This state-of-the-art system is another example of how we are putting innovation at the forefront of everything we do.

The £1.5 billion programme, known as Marshall, provides improved reliability, quality of service and cost savings by using Aquila Engineering teams to maintain the equipment. The programme is expected to save the UK taxpayer up to £317 million across the next 22 years.

The air traffic system includes a £400 million investment in advanced surveillance radars and a wide range of sophisticated equipment such as tower

systems, new surveillance and navigation aids and radios.

Sir Simon Bollom, CEO of DE&S, the procurement arm of the MOD, said:

This is a key milestone in a programme that is vital to front-line capability. It is an excellent example of collaboration between DE&S, the RAF and industry to provide the Armed Forces with the technology to do their job safely and effectively.

Squadron Leader Steve Leech, Senior Air Traffic Control Officer (SATCO) at RAF Shawbury said:

As the first unit to transition to full operational service, the last year has naturally been both a challenging and exciting period of change. I am immensely proud of my team in turning this advanced equipment into an operational capability.

Working in ever-closer partnership with Aquila, controllers and duty holders now have a much deeper understanding of the air traffic management surveillance solution than ever before.

Michael Stoller, CEO of Aquila said:

The full Marshall ATM Solution entering operational service at RAF Shawbury marks the achievement of a major milestone in the Marshall programme. This new technology will transform air traffic management for our military in the UK and overseas and enable our customer to realise significant operational and cost saving benefits.

The programme supports implementation of the [Integrated Review](#) and [Defence Command Paper](#), published last year, which placed an emphasis on more productive, active and globally deployed Armed Forces.

[Diversity in recruitment – update](#) **[January 2021](#)**

In November, the team published an article on the importance of diversity, and made changes to our recruitment process for our PhD Placement Programme.

Since then, we've had further discussions with two experts at one of our Partner Universities. [Marie Juanchich](#) and [Daniel Jolles](#), from the University of Essex spoke to us about some changes we could make to recruitment processes for our permanent staff.

We are currently [recruiting](#) for two senior policy advisors, with a closing deadline of the 11th January 2022. We have made several changes, within Civil Service HR guidelines, to make the process more inclusive.

Defining diversity

People often talk about diversity, but rarely define it. We decided to highlight groups which have historically been under-represented in the Civil Service. This includes disabled applications, and those from BAME or lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Encouraging candidates from under-represented to contact the vacancy manager

This is an unwritten rule, where for more senior roles, applicants are expected to contact the vacancy manager. We've explicitly encouraged staff from under-represented backgrounds to contact the vacancy manager if they want to find out more about the role.

An online information session

Even with encouragement, some people might not feel confident in contacting the vacancy manager, so we wanted to run an open session that anyone could join to find out more about the role and team. We had lots of people attend and ask useful questions that everyone could learn from. We [recorded](#) this session for those who could not attend.

Increased outreach

We've made an effort to build on previous efforts by sharing our advert with several departmental networks, as well as the cross-government Civil Service Race Forum Network, to attract as diverse a candidate pool as possible. We also produced a [short video](#), where one of our Deputy Heads of team talks about the role, so that this could be more easily shared and engaged with.

Changes to sifting

Once all the applications are in, we intend to score each response by question and not by individual. This helps reduce the risk of building up an idea of a candidate from one response and start to score subsequent sections differently.

We're always open to more ideas, so please contact us at team@openinnovation.gov.uk if you have any thoughts on how we can make the process even more inclusive. If you're interested in applying, you can find the job description and application portal [here](#).

[Making Tax Digital for VAT is coming – are you ready?](#)

Businesses are reminded to take steps to prepare for Making Tax Digital for Value Added Tax (VAT) before it becomes mandatory for all VAT-registered businesses from 1 April this year.

Making Tax Digital is designed to help businesses eliminate common errors and save time managing their tax affairs.

Making Tax Digital for VAT is part of the overall digitalisation of UK Tax. In a recent independent study of over 2,000 businesses, 69% reported experiencing at least one benefit from Making Tax Digital. These included preparing and submitting returns faster and increased confidence that they were getting tax right. Sixty-seven percent of businesses also felt Making Tax Digital had reduced the potential for mistakes in at least one aspect of the record keeping, preparing and submitting returns process.

As of December 2021, nearly 1.6 million taxpayers had joined Making Tax Digital for VAT with more than 11 million returns successfully submitted. Around a third of VAT-registered businesses with taxable turnover below £85,000 have voluntarily signed up to Making Tax Digital for VAT ahead of April 2022, and thousands more are signing up each week.

Since April 2019, businesses with a taxable turnover above £85,000 have already been required to follow Making Tax Digital, keeping digital records and filing VAT returns using Making Tax Digital compatible software.

In July 2020, it was announced that all VAT-registered businesses must file digitally through Making Tax Digital from April 2022, regardless of turnover. HMRC is now reminding businesses below the £85,000 threshold of the steps which they need to take to be ready.

To sign up to Making Tax Digital VAT, businesses, or an agent on a businesses' behalf, need to:

1. visit [GOV.UK and choose Making Tax Digital-compatible software](#)
2. keep digital records starting from 1 April 2022 or the beginning of their VAT period
3. sign up and submit their VAT Return through Making Tax Digital

If businesses have not yet signed up to Making Tax Digital for VAT, they should do so now to ensure they are ready in time for the April 2022 deadline.

Joanna Rowland, HMRC's Director General for Transformation, said:

Making Tax Digital is fundamental to the delivery of a trusted and modern tax system, making it easier for businesses to get their tax right and supporting the UK to go digital.

By signing up for Making Tax Digital, we expect most businesses to experience long-term benefits, including reduced errors and time saved in managing their tax affairs.

We encourage businesses to explore digital record-keeping for their VAT affairs and use this time to choose the right software to support their business needs.

Mike Cherry, FSB National Chair, said:

We have worked hard to ensure Making Tax Digital launch dates were adjusted to give small businesses more time to prepare and allow more competition to open up in the accounting software market. It's important that firms do all they can to get ahead of deadlines and access the affordable platforms that are now available; if they are members of FSB, they will have access to a new easy Making Tax Digital member service that we are creating.

We'll continue to work with government, and through our support services, to minimise the admin and cost impacts of Making Tax Digital on small firms whilst unlocking the productivity gains the initiative could bring.

Businesses can find help and support on [how to sign up for Making Tax Digital](#) on GOV.UK. Agents can sign up on behalf of a business, although businesses remain responsible for meeting their VAT obligations. Those who do not join may be charged a penalty for failure to do so.

For businesses who need help and support on signing up for Making Tax Digital, HMRC is running a series of webinars. More information can be found on [HMRC's Making Tax Digital help page](#).

We recognise that some businesses will experience upfront costs in joining Making Tax Digital. There are a range of compatible software products available for Making Tax Digital for VAT, allowing businesses to choose which tools they use to run their business and tax affairs. A [list of software compatible with Making Tax Digital for VAT](#), including low-cost options is available on GOV.UK.

Some VAT-registered businesses may be eligible for an exemption from Making Tax Digital, if it is not reasonable or practicable for them to use digital tools for their tax. If a business has previously been granted an exemption for VAT online filing, this will carry over to Making Tax Digital VAT requirements. [Information on how to apply for an exemption is available on GOV.UK](#).

Example case studies from [businesses who are currently benefitting from Making Tax Digital for VAT](#) are ready to watch on YouTube.

Businesses can choose to register themselves for Making Tax Digital or can ask their agent to do this for them.

Businesses, or an agent on their behalf, must [sign up to Making Tax Digital for VAT](#) via GOV.UK to fully join Making Tax Digital. They must have Making Tax Digital-compatible software before signing up.

Please ensure that you sign up to Making Tax Digital at least 5 days after your last non-Making Tax Digital VAT return deadline date, and no less than 7 days before your first Making Tax Digital VAT Return deadline date or you may pay for your VAT twice.

Businesses must keep digital records under Making Tax Digital. This can be done through software. Where a business chooses to use bridging software, digital links must be in place to ensure that records are kept digitally as information is transferred between different platforms.

Businesses need to have signed up to Making Tax Digital for their first VAT return starting on or after 1 April 2022. They may not be required to make their first submission via Making Tax Digital until Summer 2022.

[Impact of Making Tax Digital for VAT](#) was prepared by IFF Research for HMRC in July 2021.

In 2020, the government published '[Building a trusted, modern tax administration system](#)', setting out a vision of a UK tax system fit for the 21st century, designed to improve its resilience, effectiveness and support for taxpayers. Making Tax Digital is the first phase of a move toward this modern, digital tax service.

Making Tax Digital first launched for those with taxable turnover above the VAT threshold (£85,000 per annum) in April 2019.

Last year, the government announced that Making Tax Digital for Income Tax Self Assessment will be introduced a year later and will now come into effect in the tax year beginning in April 2024, giving businesses more time to prepare.