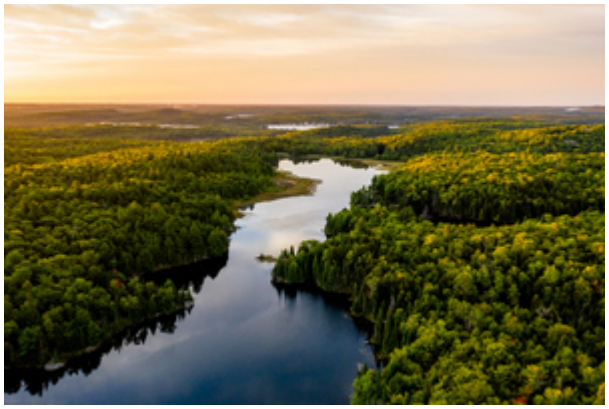
CMA consults on environmental sustainability advice



In July 2021, Kwasi Kwarteng, the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) wrote to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) asking it to provide advice to government on how the tools available under competition and consumer law can better support Net Zero and sustainability goals, including preparing for climate change.

The Secretary of State asked:

- Whether, and if so how, current legal frameworks restrict or block initiatives that might support the UK's Net Zero and sustainability goals?
- Are there changes to the UK's competition and consumer law that would help to achieve the UK's Net Zero and sustainability goals?
- Are there other opportunities within the UK's competition and consumer policy toolbox that would support the UK's Net Zero and sustainability goals, which the government should be considering?

Before responding to the Secretary of State, the CMA is calling for views from all interested parties to ensure it provides government with informed advice. The CMA's Call for Inputs document outlines the key areas in which it is seeking information – these are: competition law enforcement, merger control, consumer protection law, and market investigations. It is particularly interested in hearing about specific instances where businesses or consumers felt that competition or consumer law impacted their ability to act sustainably.

The Call for Inputs will be open until Wednesday 10 November 2021.

Sarah Cardell, the CMA's General Counsel, said:

> We welcome this opportunity to advise the government on these important issues, particularly as the UK prepares to host the COP26 conference.
>
> More than ever, it is important that public bodies, businesses,

non-governmental organisations and consumers consider their contribution to the achievement of the UK's Net Zero and environmental sustainability goals. We want to make sure that the competition and consumer enforcement regimes are able to play their part too.

Supporting a wider effort to make our economy cleaner and greener is one of the CMA's top priorities. That's why we're keen to hear from as wide a range of stakeholders as possible. This feedback will help shape the advice we give to the government.

1. The BEIS Secretary of State wrote to the CMA on 19 July 2021, requesting that it provide advice by early 2022.
2. The advice the CMA produces will be published at a later date.
3. For media queries, please contact the press office via press@cma.gov.uk or on 020 3738 6460.

Published 29 September 2021
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1. 29 September 2021

   First published.

Report 06/2021: Near miss with a member of staff at Rowlands Castle station

Press release

RAIB has today released its report into a near miss with a member of staff at Rowlands Castle station, Hampshire, 19 December 2020.

Rowlands Castle station (Photo by Simon Burchell on Wikimedia Commons. Used under Creative Commons licence.)

Summary

R062021_210929_Rowlands _Castle

PDF, 7.34MB, 35 pages

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At about 19:14 hrs on Saturday 19 December 2020, a Network Rail Mobile Operations Manager (MOM) came close to being struck by a passenger train at Rowlands Castle station. The MOM was on the track retrieving a rubbish bag when the train approached at about 60 mph (97 km/h). The MOM climbed back onto the platform and was clear of the line about one second before the train passed.

The incident occurred because the MOM had not arranged protection from train movements before going onto the track, the MOM and the signaller did not have a mutual or accurate understanding about the reality of the situation, and because the MOM was otherwise unaware that the train was approaching. Underlying these causes are factors associated with the MOM's competence, which was not adequately managed to ensure he worked safely on the track, and local management not functioning properly, which probably affected the recruitment, training and ongoing monitoring of the MOM.

Although not causal to the incident, RAIB observed that voice communications were not recorded due to a fault with equipment at the signal box. RAIB also observed that the automatic station announcements were not providing adequate warning to passengers of non-stopping trains at Rowlands Castle.

Recommendations

RAIB has made four recommendations and identified three learning points. Three of the recommendations are addressed to Network Rail and concern the competency framework for MOMs as well as management arrangements for operational response staff, at both local and national level. The fourth recommendation is addressed to South Western Railway and is aimed at ensuring safety-related announcements at stations are made in a timely manner. The learning points highlight the importance of processes associated with safe systems of work and safety-critical communications, as well as addressing the observation on voice communications recording.

Notes to editors

1. The sole purpose of RAIB investigations is to prevent future accidents and incidents and improve railway safety. RAIB does not establish blame, liability or carry out prosecutions.
2. RAIB operates, as far as possible, in an open and transparent manner. While our investigations are completely independent of the railway industry, we do maintain close liaison with railway companies and if we discover matters that may affect the safety of the railway, we make sure that information about them is circulated to the right people as soon as possible, and certainly long before publication of our final report.
3. For media enquiries, please call 01932 440015.

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My parrot destroyed my vehicle registration certificate among most unusual reasons shared when getting a replacement

Press release

The most unusual reasons people have shared with DVLA for needing a replacement vehicle registration certificate (V5C)

“I wasn’t concentrating and shredded it”, “it was in my trouser pocket and went through the washing machine” and “my parrot destroyed it” are among the most unusual reasons people have shared with DVLA for needing a replacement vehicle registration certificate (V5C).

DVLA launched an online service to get a replacement V5C in September 2020 and is the quickest way to replace the document. Motorists can order a replacement no matter the reason and since launch the service has been used more than 300,000 times (around 5,800 times a week).

Other unusual reasons shared with DVLA include:

> My child covered their school book with it.
>
> I left it at a hotel in the Gobi Desert when driving across Asia during my gap year.
>
> Someone bought me a car for my birthday – they wrapped the keys in the V5C and I tore it open without knowing.
>
> The dog ate it.
>
> It blew out the window and when I went to look for it, it was gone.
>
> My grandchild took it to play outside and buried it in the mud.

Julie Lennard, DVLA Chief Executive, said:

> Our online service to replace a V5C is quick and easy to use and means customers will receive their replacement vehicle registration certificate within the week.
>
> So whether you misplaced your V5C, it's being digested by your pet or your kids have used it for arts and crafts – the quickest way to get a replacement is on GOV.UK.

Notes to editors:

Motorists who need to apply for a replacement V5C should go online

It's much quicker to use the online service to replace a lost or damaged V5C and motorists will get a new one in 5 working days – motorists applying by post may have to wait up to 6 weeks.

It costs £25 for a replacement V5C whether you go online or apply by post. The service to replace a lost or damaged V5C on GOV.UK followed the change address on vehicle log book service, launched in June, which has been used more than 1.6 million times.

DVLA's online services are the quickest, easiest and often cheapest way to deal with DVLA. Motorists can use DVLA's online services to let DVLA know when they sell or buy a vehicle, change the address on their driving licence or to renew their driving licence.

Published 29 September 2021

Plans to unlock power of gene editing unveiled

New plans to unlock the power of gene editing to help our farmers grow more resistant, more nutritious and more productive crops have been published as part of the government response to the gene editing consultation, announced today (29 September) by Environment Secretary George Eustice.

The response sets out how we plan to pave the way to enable use of gene editing technologies, which can help better protect the environment.

Gene editing is a tool that makes plant breeding more precise and efficient so we can breed crops that are more nutritious, resistant to pests and disease, more productive and more beneficial to the environment, helping farmers and reducing impacts on the environment.

Research could lead to sugar beet varieties resistant to viruses that can cause serious yield losses and costs to farmers unless pesticides are used. Such new varieties would help make our farmers more productive and, importantly, also reduce the need for chemical pesticides, protecting our bees and other pollinating insects.

Gene editing is different from genetic modification, because it does not result in the introduction of DNA from other species and creates new varieties similar to those that could be produced more slowly by natural breeding processes – but currently they are regulated in the same way as genetically modified organisms.

Leaving the EU allows the UK to set our own rules, opening up opportunities to adopt a more scientific and proportionate approach to the regulation of genetic technologies. As a first step, the government will change the rules relating to gene editing to cut red tape and make research and development easier.

The focus will be on plants produced by genetic technologies, where genetic changes could have occurred naturally or could have been a result of traditional breeding methods.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

> Gene editing has the ability to harness the genetic resources that nature has provided. It is a tool that could help us in order to tackle some of the biggest challenges that we face – around food

> security, climate change and biodiversity loss.
>
> Outside the EU, we are able to foster innovation to help grow plants that are stronger and more resilient to climate change. We will be working closely with farming and environmental groups to ensure that the right rules are in place.

Defra chief scientific advisor Gideon Henderson said:

> Gene editing technologies provide a more precise way of introducing targeted genetic changes – making the same types of changes to plants and animals that occur more slowly naturally or through traditional breeding.
>
> These tools enable us to harness the richness of natural variation to build better crops, speeding up a process humans have done through breeding for hundreds of years.
>
> There are exciting opportunities to improve the environment, and we can also produce new varieties that are healthier to eat, and more resistant to climate change.

Scientists will continue to be required to notify Defra of any research trials. The planned changes will ease burdens for research and development involving plants, using technologies such as gene editing, to align them with plants developed using traditional breeding methods.

The next step will be to review the regulatory definitions of a genetically modified organism, to exclude organisms produced by gene editing and other genetic technologies if they could have been developed by traditional breeding. GMO regulations would continue to apply where gene editing introduces DNA from other species into an organism.

The government will consider the appropriate measures needed to enable gene edited products to be brought to market safely and responsibly. In the longer term, this will be followed by a review of England’s approach to GMO regulation more broadly.

We are committed to the very highest standards of environmental and food safety in the UK. There will be no weakening of our strong food safety standards. Gene edited foods will only be permitted to be marketed if they are judged to not present a risk to health, not mislead consumers, and not have lower nutritional value than their non-genetically modified counterparts.

The government will continue to work with farming and environmental groups to develop the right rules and to ensure robust controls are in place to maintain the highest food safety and environmental protection standards, while supporting the production of healthier food.

Professor Robin May, the Food Standards Agency's Chief Scientific Adviser, said:

> There are significant benefits to changing the way we regulate genetic technologies, to make sure the system is as up to date as possible and properly takes into account new technologies and scientific discoveries.
>
> We support giving consumers choice and recognise the potential benefits that GE plants and animals may bring to the food system.
>
> We are working closely with Defra and a range of other partners to ensure that potential changes to the regulation of genetic technologies will maintain the high food standards that UK consumers currently enjoy.

Samantha Brooke, Chief Executive of the British Society of Plant Breeders, said:

> Changing the way new agricultural breeding technologies are regulated, by taking gene editing out of the scope of GMO rules, will encourage research and innovation to develop healthier, more nutritious food, and to make farming systems more sustainable and resilient in the face of climate change.
>
> Gene editing involves making desired changes to a plant or animal which could have occurred naturally or through conventional breeding, but more quickly and with greater precision. Developing an improved crop variety using conventional breeding – for example to improve its nutritional quality or resistance to disease – can take up to 15 years, but gene editing can help reduce that timescale significantly.
>
> Without the contribution of plant breeding over the past 20 years, farmers would have produced 20% less food in this country, which means an extra 1.8 million hectares of land would have been needed to supply our food needs. That expansion would have impacted vulnerable ecosystems, and generated an extra 300 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.
>
> Current regulations on plant breeding and seeds support safer and more sustainable food production, and this regulatory system can also embrace new crop varieties produced using gene editing techniques, which replicate what plant breeders are already doing, but in a much quicker and more targeted way.
>
> We strongly welcome the Government's plan to make controls on gene editing more science-based. This sends a clear signal that the UK is set on a more pro-innovation trajectory outside the EU. It will certainly boost prospects for plant breeding companies large and

> small, as well as scientists in the public sector, to continue improving our food crops for the benefit of society and the environment.

Professor Helen Sang OBE, Head of Division of Functional Genetics and Development, The Roslin Institute and R(D)SVS, said:

> Gene editing offers major opportunities to address the combined challenges of rapidly increasing global demand for healthy and nutritious food with the goal of net zero carbon emissions.
>
> I welcome today’s announcement as a first step towards reducing unnecessary and unscientific regulatory barriers to the use of advanced breeding techniques which are precise and targeted, allowing us to make specific genetic changes.
>
> Adopting a more proportionate and enabling approach to regulation will open up increased opportunities for international research collaboration, inward investment and technology-based exports, bringing a major boost for UK science.