

# Morrisons' proposals provisionally clear way for McColl's deal

In July 2022, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) [launched its investigation](#) into Morrisons reported £190 million purchase of stores owned by McColl's Retail Group Plc.

Following its Phase 1 investigation, the CMA found that the deal would not harm the vast majority of shoppers or other businesses, but that it raised competition concerns in 35 areas. The two retailers accepted these concerns and engaged with the CMA in discussing potential remedies.

Morrisons has now offered to divest 28 McColl's stores to a purchaser or purchasers to be approved by CMA. This includes 26 stores in England (in areas such as Swindon, Lincoln and Brentwood), 1 store in Scotland (Perth) and 1 store in Wales (Newport).

The CMA is minded to accept these proposals, which appear to be suitable to restore the loss of competition brought about by the deal across each of the 35 local areas. While the number of McColl's stores that Morrisons is proposing to sell is lower than the number of areas in which concerns were identified, the sale of some stores would address the concerns in multiple areas.

The CMA is now consulting on the proposals – known as undertakings – for the sale of these stores. If the CMA accepts the proposals, the deal would be cleared to proceed.

Sorcha O'Carroll, CMA Senior Director of Mergers, said:

Our preliminary view is that the sale of these stores will preserve competition in these local areas and prevent consumers from losing out due to this deal, at a time when shoppers are already facing rising prices.

If, after reviewing the responses to our consultation, we conclude that the competition issues have been addressed, the deal will be cleared.

McColl's operates convenience newsagent shops, with over 1,100 stores across England, Scotland, and Wales, while Morrisons (owned by parent company Clayton, Dubilier & Rice (CD&R)) has around 500 grocery stores in the UK. CD&R is also the parent company of the Motor Fuel Group (MFG). MFG owns over 800 convenience stores, the vast majority of which are attached to its petrol stations.

For more information, or to respond to our consultation, visit the [Morrisons/McColl's merger inquiry](#) page.

1. The CMA is publishing a notice of consultation and the text of the Proposed Undertakings, alongside the text of the Phase 1 decision of 8 September 2022 and the decision of 23 September 2022 that the CMA is considering undertakings offered by Morrisons. The CMA's consultation is scheduled to run until 24 October 2022.
2. On 8 September 2022, following a Phase 1 review, the CMA has found that Morrisons acquisition of McColl's gives rise to a realistic prospect of substantial lessening of competition (SLC) in relation to retailers in 35 local areas across England, Scotland and Wales.
3. The CMA served an initial enforcement order on 25 May 2022, requiring the companies to operate independently, as they did before the purchase, and the order remains in force. Details of the order can be found on the [Morrisons/McColl's merger inquiry page](#).
4. The list of the 28 McColl's stores can be found [here](#).
5. All media enquiries should be directed to the CMA press office by email on [press@cma.gov.uk](mailto:press@cma.gov.uk), or by phone on 020 3738 6460.

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## [Self Assessment customers could be a target for fraudsters, HMRC warns](#)

Self Assessment customers, who are starting to think about their annual tax returns for the 2021 to 2022 tax year, should guard against being targeted by fraudsters, warns HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

In the 12 months to August 2022, HMRC responded to more than 180,000 referrals of suspicious contact from the public, of which almost 81,000 were scams offering fake tax rebates.

Criminals claiming to be from HMRC have targeted individuals by email, text and phone with their communications ranging from offering bogus tax rebates to threatening arrest for tax evasion. Contacts like these should sound alarm bells – HMRC would never call threatening arrest.

Anyone contacted by someone claiming to be from HMRC in a way that arouses suspicion is advised to take their time and check the [scams advice](#) on GOV.UK.

Customers can report any suspicious activity to HMRC. They can forward suspicious texts claiming to be from HMRC to 60599 and emails to [phishing@hmrc.gov.uk](mailto:phishing@hmrc.gov.uk). Any tax scam phone calls can be reported to HMRC using the [online form](#) on GOV.UK.

Myrtle Lloyd, HMRC's Director General for Customer Services, said:

Never let yourself be rushed. If someone contacts you saying they're from HMRC, wanting you to urgently transfer money or give

personal information, be on your guard.

HMRC will never ring up threatening arrest. Only criminals do that.

Tax scams come in many forms. Some threaten immediate arrest for tax evasion, others offer a rebate. Contacts like these should set alarm bells ringing, so take your time and check 'HMRC scams advice' on GOV.UK.

Fraudsters target customers when they know they are more likely to be in contact with HMRC, which is why Self Assessment customers should be extra vigilant to this activity. There is a risk they could be taken in by scam texts, emails or calls either offering a 'refund' or demanding unpaid tax, thinking that they are genuine HMRC communications referring to their Self Assessment return.

Some customers who have not done a Self Assessment return previously might be tricked into clicking on links in these emails or texts and revealing personal or financial information to criminals.

The deadline for filing paper tax returns for the 2021 to 2022 tax year is 31 October 2022, and 31 January 2023 for those filing their tax return online. Customers who file their return online via GOV.UK should not share their HMRC login details. Someone using the details could steal from the customer or make a fraudulent claim in their name.

HMRC is actively tackling the scams and fraudsters who attempt to mimic genuine HMRC activity and messages. The department's dedicated Customer Protection Team works continuously to identify and close down scams.

HMRC also tackles misleading websites designed to make people pay for services that should be free or low cost, charging to connect people to free HMRC phone helplines. To protect the public, HMRC formally disputes and takes ownership of HMRC-branded internet domain or website names. Since 2017, the department has recovered more than 183 websites hosting low-value services such as call-connection sites, saving the public millions of pounds.

More information about [Self Assessment](#)

In the 12 months to August 2022, HMRC has:

- responded to 181,296 referrals of suspicious contact from the public. Some 80,662 of these offered bogus tax rebates
- responded to 55,386 reports of phone scams in total, 87% down on the previous year. In April 2020 HMRC received reports of only 425 phone scams. In August 2022 this was 5,913
- reported 10,565 malicious web pages for takedown
- worked with the telecoms industry and Ofcom to remove 48 phone numbers being used to commit HMRC-related phone scams.

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# UKAEA and Tokamak Energy to collaborate

- Agreement follows news that STEP prototype fusion power plant will be built in North Nottingham

UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and Tokamak Energy have signed a framework agreement to enable closer collaboration on developing spherical tokamaks as a route to commercial fusion energy.

The five-year agreement will take the form of joint technology development, shared utilisation of equipment and facilities and associated secondment of staff between the two organisations.

The collaboration will focus on areas including materials development and testing, power generation, fuel cycle, diagnostics and remote handling.

Professor Ian Chapman, UKAEA CEO, said:

“Fusion has great potential to deliver almost limitless clean energy for future generations. This new agreement with Tokamak Energy will benefit both organisations and help advance our collective ambitions, because together we are stronger. Fusion presents an exciting opportunity for the UK and we’re proud our ground-breaking work here continues to drive innovation and progress as part of a thriving cluster.”

Chris Kelsall, CEO Tokamak Energy, said:

“We are in a race against time to phase out the world’s reliance on fossil fuels and aim to deliver fusion as a clean, sustainable, low cost and globally available energy source. Tokamak Energy and UKAEA jointly recognise the importance of collaboration to accelerate the delivery of commercial fusion. We welcome the opportunity to progress knowledge, skill sharing and joint development opportunities with UKAEA, further boosting the UK’s world leading fusion cluster.”

Both organisations have operational spherical tokamak devices, with Tokamak Energy’s ST40 recently achieving a plasma temperature of 100 million degrees Celsius, the threshold required for commercial fusion energy.

UKAEA’s MAST Upgrade experiment has helped pave the way for the development of its ambitious STEP (Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production) programme, which aims to design and build a prototype fusion powerplant capable of producing net electricity.

It was announced last week that the STEP prototype powerplant will be designed and constructed at West Burton, Nottinghamshire, to demonstrate the ability to put net electricity on the grid, enabling future commercial fusion

energy plants to be commissioned and constructed.

Tokamak Energy will soon be unveiling its next device, which will be the world's first high field spherical tokamak to demonstrate the full potential of high temperature superconducting (HTS) magnets, due to be commissioned in the mid-2020s. It will also demonstrate multiple advanced technologies required for fusion energy and inform the design of the company's first commercial fusion power pilot plant, which will demonstrate the capability to deliver net electricity to the grid.

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## **£122 million employment boost for people receiving mental health support**

- £122 million boost to service will give those receiving mental health support the opportunity to speak to employment advisers
- Employment advisers and therapists will work together so that a person can return to or find work easier and faster – driving economic growth

Across England, people with common mental health problems like stress, anxiety and depression will have access to an employment adviser thanks to new Government funding.

£122 million is being invested to roll out a vital NHS England service nationally, providing those who receive mental health support with employment advice to help them stay in work or return to the job market quicker, with the right support in place.

The service brings therapists and employment advisers together to help people with mental health problems such as anxiety and depression find work tailored to them. With strong evidence that being in work improves mental health, supporting more people into work will not only fuel a thriving labour market, but also increase individual prosperity.

Continued support to help individuals focus on and progress in their careers will in turn help grow the economy.

Department of Work and Pensions Secretary of State, Chloe Smith said:

On World Mental Health Day, it is important to recognise the virtuous circle between health and work – we know that giving people the support they need to work is very good for their long term health.

The Government's growth-focused agenda will deliver jobs, higher

wages and greater opportunities – and I am delighted that people who have faced barriers to entering the workforce due to poor mental health will now be able to access support across England.

Helping people access both clinical support for their mental health as well as employment advice gives them the tools they need to get into or return to work. This is vital to helping drive down inactivity and growing our economy so we can deliver more money and support for public services such as these.

Health and Social Care Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister, Thérèse Coffey, said:

Good physical health and mental wellbeing of the nation is also good for the economic health of the nation and this government is committed to supporting those not working due to ill health.

Giving people receiving mental wellbeing support access to an employment adviser will help them start, stay, and succeed in work – improving their wellbeing and resilience as well as growing our economy.

Claire Murdoch, NHS national mental health director, said:

The NHS is committed to keep doing its part to support those with mental health issues who want to work, and offering employment advice from experienced advisors through our Talking Therapies services across the country is a fantastic and important development, especially in times of economic challenges and increased need for mental health support.

We know that being in work has many benefits for our mental health and wellbeing, from increasing our sense of purpose to providing a structured routine, and while thousands of people already benefit from this ground-breaking service, this wider country-wide rollout means all people struggling with anxiety and depression will be able to access both our usual NHS Talking Therapies offer, via their GP or online registration to their local service, and expert employment advice, in all areas of the country.

Referral to Improved Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT), often referred to as 'NHS talking therapies' services, can be through a GP, healthcare professional, or through self-referral. The use of IAPT services, taking part

in psychological treatment, and employment support is purely voluntary.

NHS England Therapists and employment advisers already work together in 40% of the country. Over the three-year spending review period the service will be extended nationally with recruitment and training of around 700 employment advisers so that up to 100,000 people can receive the combined offer each year from 2024 to 2025, accessing the support to start, stay and succeed in work.

The service is already fully operational in Cheshire and The Wirral, providing people with the support to get back on their feet and back into work. Employment advisers provide compassionate support for those who have been through truly difficult times.

## **Testimonials:**

Peter\*

After the death of his wife and assuming sole caring responsibilities for his two children, Peter had been out of work with grief and stress for two years. After using his local talking therapies Peter self-referred himself to employment advisers, he worked with his employment adviser to find roles that would be manageable with his childcare commitments and help him benefit from the social aspects of returning to work. To prepare him for job interviews and build his confidence, the employment adviser helped Peter complete interview training and provided him with guidance on returning to work after a long absence. Through the support of his employment adviser, Peter is now in flexible part-time employment as a salesman and delivery driver and is excited he is working in a role that suits his lifestyle.

Carol\*

Carol was absent from employment for a period of two years as she cared for her parents up until their deaths. Carol suffered with anxiety due to this and went to talking therapies to help. After this period Carol felt employment would help with her confidence. Carol worked with her employment adviser to improve her CV, enhance her job searching skills and build up her confidence. The employment adviser also helped refine Carol's interview skills, which eased her anxiety and supported her to be successful at a job interview for a care home. Once offered the job, Carol was further supported with guidance on returning to work after a prolonged period of absence. She has now completed her training at the care home and through the support she has received, her life has changed drastically for the better.

\*Not their real names

## **Further Information:**

- IAPT services were first launched in 2008. IAPT services provide psychological therapy to people with depression and anxiety to help them to recover from and improve the self-management of their common mental health condition.

- EAs in IAPT is a voluntary service that enables those that request it to access combined psychological treatment and employment support to help them to remain in, return to or find work and improve their mental health.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0115 965 8781

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## **North Korea ballistic missile launch: FCDO statement**

News story

A Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office spokesperson statement on North Korea's ballistic missile launch on 8 October.



A Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office spokesperson said:

North Korea's decision to conduct another ballistic missile test on 8 October is a violation of UN Security Council Resolutions. The UK continues to work closely with our partners to urge North Korea to return to dialogue and take credible steps towards denuclearisation in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

We call on North Korea to prioritise the well-being of their people instead of the illegal pursuit of nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

### **Media enquiries**

Email [newsdesk@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:newsdesk@fcdo.gov.uk)

Telephone 020 7008 3100



Contact the FCDO Communication Team via email (monitored 24 hours a day) in the first instance, and we will respond as soon as possible.

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