Building safety levy moves a step closer

Proposals for how developers would pay to fix unsafe buildings have been set out today by the government as it moves a step closer to imposing its new Building Safety Levy.

The government has now begun consulting developers and other interested parties on the plans, which will see an estimated £3 billion collected over the next 10 years.

Under the proposals drawn by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, developers of residential buildings, regardless of their height, will have to pay the levy contribution as part of the building control process.

This will mean that unless the levy is paid, a developer could not move on to the next stage of the building process, which could lead to project delays and impact future revenues.

Minister for Local Government and Building Safety Lee Rowley said:

> We have been clear that developers must pay to fix building safety issues and the Building Safety Levy is an important part of making that a reality.
>
> Today's consultation will give industry and local authorities an opportunity to work with us going forward.
>
> By having these plans in place, we can ensure that all leaseholders are protected, regardless of whether their developer has pledged to remediate or not.

The government's proposals include an option to alter levy rates depending on where in the country the building is, with lower rates in areas where land and house prices are less expensive. It also suggests that local authorities will be best placed to act as the collection agents as they have the necessary systems, data, knowledge, and relationships in place with the developer sector.

In order to protect the supply of affordable homes, it is proposed they be exempt from a levy charge. This is alongside a number of community buildings, including NHS facilities, children's homes and refuges, including those for victims of domestic abuse.

The levy will be reviewed regularly so that it can be adjusted to take account of changing circumstances, such as wider economic conditions. There are also plans to protect small and medium sized enterprises by excluding smaller projects.

The Building Safety Levy will run alongside the developer pledges which were announced earlier this year. Under the pledges, 49 of the UK's biggest homebuilders have committed to fix life-critical fire-safety defects in buildings over 11 metres where they had a role in developing those buildings in the last 30 years. This amounts to a commitment of at least £2 billion.

The Building Safety Levy was first announced in February 2021 and plans to extend it to cover all residential buildings were confirmed in April 2022. The Building Safety Levy is one of the ways we will ensure that the burden of paying for fixing historic building safety defects does not fall on leaseholders or taxpayers.

The consultation seeks views on the delivery of the Levy, including how it will work, what the rates will be, who must pay, what sanctions and enforcement will apply, and who is responsible for collecting the levy.

The consultation will be open for ten working weeks from today (22 November) and seeks the views of all interested parties, especially developers of all sizes, building control professionals and local authorities. Their views will be taken into account before any final decisions are made next year.

Further information:

The consultation is available here.

Regulator launches inquiry into Islamic Centre of England

Press release

The Charity Commission has opened a statutory inquiry into the Islamic Centre of England Limited over serious governance concerns.

The charity is based in London and its charitable purposes include advancing the religion of Islam and education and welfare among the Muslim community.

The regulator's decision follows extensive engagement with the charity over recent years, which has included issuing the charity with an Official Warning. The Warning followed two events held at the charity's premises in 2020 that eulogised Major General Qasem Soleimani who is subject to UK sanctions.

A follow-up case in 2021 concluded that the charity was only partially compliant with the actions set out in the Official Warning and identified further regulatory concerns. These included concerns about the content of the charity's website and the trustees' management of conflicts of interest, and led to the Commission issuing an Action Plan.

The Commission has identified that the trustees have failed to fully comply with the Action Plan and Official Warning and a number of further regulatory concerns also remain.

The Commission has therefore opened a statutory inquiry into the charity, which will examine:

1. The extent to which the trustees have properly exercised their legal duties and responsibilities under charity law, in particular regarding the charity's website and events.
2. Whether the trustees are willing, and able, to further the charity's objects in accordance its Governing Document.
3. The governance and administration of the charity by the trustees, including the identification and management of conflicts of interest and/or loyalty.

The Commission may extend the scope of the inquiry if additional regulatory issues emerge.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were.

Reports of previous inquiries are available on GOV.UK.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.
2. The inquiry was opened on 14 November 2022, under section 46 of the Charities Act 2011.

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Government launches £1.5 million AI programme for reducing carbon emissions

- The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy launches new innovation programme supporting the use of artificial intelligence to reduce carbon emissions
- the AI for Decarbonisation programme forms part of the government’s £1 billion Net Zero Innovation Portfolio
- the programme aims to stimulate further innovation in the UK in AI, to drive growth and achieve Net Zero targets

Today (Tuesday 22 November) the government has launched a new innovation programme which will support the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to reduce the UK’s carbon emissions.

The AI for Decarbonisation Programme, backed by £1.5 million in funding, forms part of the government’s £1 billion Net Zero Innovation Portfolio, and comprises separate streams of grant funding to be launched in 2 initial stages.

Stream 1, worth up to £500,000, will be made available to co-fund a virtual centre of excellence on AI innovation and decarbonisation through to March 2025, while Stream 2, worth up to £1 million, will fund innovation projects which further the development of AI technologies to support decarbonisation.

Later in 2023, the government intends to make additional funding available to support priority areas in AI innovation identified by the virtual centre of excellence as being critical for achieving net-zero.

Science Minister George Freeman said:

> The UK is one of the world’s most advanced AI economies, and AI technology is already having a transformative impact on our economy and society. But there is tremendous potential to do more.
>
> The AI for Decarbonisation programme offers an exciting opportunity to leverage and develop the UK’s outstanding expertise in the field. Putting this rapidly-evolving technology into action will enable us to save energy costs for businesses and households, create high-value, skilled jobs, and kickstart millions of pounds of private investment while supporting our net zero targets.

The programme's objective is to stimulate further innovation in the UK in the AI sector, to drive growth and achieve our net zero ambitions by encouraging collaboration in the field across the technology, energy and industrial sectors. The programme builds on ideas developed in the [National AI Strategy] published last year which set out the ways in which AI is able to support the UK in meeting its decarbonisation targets.

Projects specifically encouraged to bid for funding include uses of AI which could enable a faster transition to renewable energy, decarbonise industry by improving energy productivity and fuel switching, and decrease emissions in the agricultural sector.

The AI for Decarbonisation Programme is anticipated to increase market growth in the UK, reduce the cost of energy for a more competitive UK industry, leverage private investment in AI, and increase the consideration of ethics, bias and equity in AI technologies with decarbonisation applications.

The programme opens for applications on 22 November 2022, and closes on 19 January 2022. Applications can be made through the AI for Decarbonisation funding page.

Companies urged to file accounts early and online to avoid penalties

Running your own company can be exciting but also challenging. Directors have lots of responsibilities including keeping company records up-to-date and making sure they're filed on time.

All limited companies, whether they trade or not, must deliver annual accounts to us each year. **This includes dormant companies.**

File early

It's the directors' responsibility to file a company's accounts. You could get a criminal record, a fine or disqualification if you do not deliver your accounts on time.

Even if an accountant files your company's accounts on your behalf, it's still your responsibility to make sure they're filed on time.

We'll send you an email to confirm we've received your accounts. We'll send you another email when we've registered your accounts.

If you're a small company, you cannot file abbreviated accounts anymore. Find out your accounts filing options for small companies.

File online

Our online services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – and there are inbuilt checks to help you avoid mistakes.

It can take as little as 15 minutes from start to finish and you'll know your accounts have been delivered on time.

To file online, you'll need your company authentication code. If you need to request a new code, you should allow up to 5 days for this to arrive at the company's registered office.

Avoid rejections

You should only send paper accounts if your company cannot file online.

Accounts filed on paper need to be manually checked. We can only check them during office opening hours, and they can take over a week to process.

If you need to file your accounts on paper, you should send them to us well before the deadline. This will give you plenty of time to correct your accounts and resend them if they are rejected. You should also consider using a guaranteed next day delivery and note any industrial disputes or other factors, which may make it difficult for a carrier to deliver on time.

We cannot accept postal delays as a reason to appeal a late filing penalty.

Guidance and support

Register for email reminders to know when your accounts are due. You can also check your filing deadline on our Find and update company information service.

Watch our YouTube videos and recordings of previous Companies House webinars for guidance on how to use our online services and information about directors' responsibilities.

More information about:

Companies House introduced the new WebFiling account in September. It has improved security features and gives you more freedom to self-manage your account.

Read about the introduction of the new WebFiling account.

[Investigation into cloud gaming and browsers to support UK tech and consumers]

The Competition and Markets Authority consulted on launching a market investigation alongside its Mobile Ecosystem Market Study report, which found that Apple and Google have an effective duopoly on mobile ecosystems that allows them to exercise a stranglehold over operating systems, app stores and web browsers on mobile devices.

Browsers are one of the most important and widely used apps on mobile devices. Most people use their browser at least daily to access online content such as information, news, videos and shopping. 97% of all mobile web browsing in the UK in 2021 happens on browsers powered by either Apple's or Google's browser engine, so any restrictions on these engines can have a major impact on users' experiences.

Computer games are a multi-billion pound industry in the UK, played by millions of people. There are already more than 800,000 users of cloud gaming services in the UK but restrictions on their distribution on mobile devices could hamper growth in this sector, meaning UK gamers miss out.

Responses to the consultation, which have been published today, reveal substantial support for a fuller investigation into the way that Apple and Google dominate the mobile browser market and how Apple restricts cloud gaming through its App Store. Many of those came from browser vendors, web developers, and cloud gaming service providers who say that the status quo is harming their businesses, holding back innovation, and adding unnecessary costs.

Web developers have complained that Apple's restrictions, combined with suggested underinvestment in its browser technology, lead to added costs and frustration as they have to deal with bugs and glitches when building web pages, and have no choice but to create bespoke mobile apps when a website might be sufficient.

Ultimately, these restrictions limit choice and may make it more difficult to bring innovative new apps to the hands of UK consumers. At the same time, Apple and Google have argued that restrictions are needed to protect users. The CMA's market investigation will consider these concerns and consider whether new rules are needed to drive better outcomes.

Market investigations can result in changes to companies' behaviour and restrictions, which improve competition and lead to greater choice for consumers and better-quality products.

Sarah Cardell, interim Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

We want to make sure that UK consumers get the best new mobile data services, and that UK developers can invest in innovative new apps.

Many UK businesses and web developers tell us they feel that they are being held back by restrictions set by Apple and Google. When the new Digital Markets regime is in place, it's likely to address these sorts of issues. In the meantime, we are using our existing powers to tackle problems where we can. We plan to investigate whether the concerns we have heard are justified and, if so, identify steps to improve competition and innovation in these sectors.

For more information, visit the mobile browsers and cloud gaming market investigation page.

1. A market investigation by the CMA is an in-depth investigation led by CMA panel members. The CMA must generally conclude a market investigation within 18 months from the date that the reference is made. Market investigations consider whether there are features of a market that have an adverse effect on competition (AEC). If there is an AEC, the CMA has the power to impose its own remedies on businesses and it can also make recommendations to other bodies such as sectoral regulators or the government – when legislation might be required for example. The CMA has wide powers to change the behaviour of firms, such as governing the way a product is sold in a particular market and the information that is available to customers buying that product. The CMA also has the power to impose structural remedies which can require companies to sell parts of their business to improve competition.

2. The CMA's work to date has identified widespread concerns in relation to digital advertising and mobile ecosystems. It has concluded that it can tackle these issues most effectively with its anticipated new powers via the Digital Markets Unit, which will allow the CMA to actively monitor, enforce and update remedies. The CMA continues to support the government to bring forward the necessary legislation, which it committed to in the Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022. In the meantime, the CMA is committed to using its existing powers to deliver one-off interventions in digital markets, where these are found to be necessary to improve outcomes for UK consumers and businesses. In particular, should the market investigation find problems with cloud gaming and mobile browsers, it may be able to tackle these via a one-off removal of restrictions.

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