

# Border Force in Northern Ireland seize more than 2 tonnes of black market tobacco

The tobacco was detected within a shipping container which had arrived at Belfast Docks from the Netherlands on Wednesday 11 November. Border Force Officers searched the shipment, which was labelled as air filters, and found the tobacco on nine pallets which weighed a total of 2.34 tonnes.

The operation was conducted under the umbrella of the Northern Ireland Organised Crime Task Force, which includes Border Force, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Police Service of Northern Ireland and other partners.

Chris Philp, Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts, said:

This was an outstanding seizure by Border Force, whose efforts have prevented a significant amount of illegal tobacco from reaching our streets and cheating the taxpayer out of hundreds of thousands of pounds which can fund our children's schooling and the NHS.

This is not a victimless crime and is often linked with other criminality. Children and young people are key targets for those who peddle illegal tobacco, encouraging them to take up smoking and exposing them to crime.

Steve Tracey, Assistant Director, Fraud Investigation Service, HMRC, said:

The sale of illegal tobacco will not be tolerated by us or our partner agencies. Disrupting criminal trade is at the heart of our strategy to clampdown on the illicit tobacco market, which costs the UK around £1.9 billion a year. This is theft from the taxpayer and undermines legitimate traders.

We encourage anyone with information about the illegal sale of tobacco to report it online or call the Fraud Hotline on 0800 788 887.

Had the smuggling attempt not been detected, it would have cost the Treasury £700,000 in unpaid duty and VAT. No arrests were made but HMRC is investigating further.

Last month, Border Force had further success in stopping illicit cigarettes

entering the UK when they seized around 10 million cigarettes at Harwich worth almost £3 million in unpaid duty.

Border Force officers use hi-tech search equipment to combat immigration crime and detect banned and restricted goods that smugglers attempt to bring into the UK.

In 2019, Border Force protected the Treasury from losing more than £210 million in unpaid duty from black market cigarettes.

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## [Extension of seabird haven to benefit 15,000 birds](#)

Today (17 November), the government has announced the expansion of a protected area in the Isles of Scilly, home to some of our rarest seabirds such as the Manx shearwater and storm petrel.

This decision is based on extensive work by Natural England with a comprehensive package of over 4 years of scientific advice and research on the new boundaries and a public consultation which took place in early spring 2019.

The Isles of Scilly supports a greater diversity of seabirds than any other site in England, with internationally important populations of European storm petrel and lesser black-backed gull. The expansion will see the site boosted by approximately 12,930 hectares and benefit 15,000 seabirds. It is one of only two protected sites in England where Manx shearwater and European storm petrel breed, and is also home to the largest population of great black-backed gulls in the UK.

Our seabird populations are an important barometer of the health of the marine environment and this marine extension to the Isles of Scilly site demonstrates the UK Government's commitment to securing the sustainable use of our seas.

With the expansion of the Isles of Scilly site into the coastal seas around the archipelago, there are now 114 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) specifically protecting birds across the UK. The newly-expanded site protects the waters around the islands for activities like feeding and preening that are crucial to the life cycles of over 15,000 seabirds.

### **Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:**

The UK seabird population is of global importance with the UK holding more than a quarter of Europe's breeding seabirds. The

expansion of this site demonstrates our ongoing commitment to protect and improve the resilience of our marine environment and precious wildlife.

Together with the development of our Seabird Conservation Strategy, we will help the coastal environment to recover and thrive for future generations to enjoy.

**Kate Sugar, Marine Lead Adviser at Natural England, said:**

The Isles of Scilly is one of the most important areas for breeding seabirds in England and their continued presence is important to the sense of place for the local community and visitors.

These inshore waters are just as important to protecting breeding seabirds as the nesting sites themselves. Natural England's public consultation on the proposals for this site enabled the local community to understand the evidence collected, the importance and implications of the designation.

Today's announcement secures greater protection for thousands of seabirds and is a positive step forward as we continue to protect and enhance Britain's sea and shorebirds.

The expansion of the site will help encourage population growth and recovery in European storm petrel and the lesser black-backed gull, while additionally offering new protections for the European shag and the great black-backed gull.

This MPA forms part of the UK's 'Blue Belt' in helping to boost resilience to man-made pressures, as well as providing space to help species adapt to the impacts of climate change.

There are now 358 MPAs in total across the UK. Regulators, such as the Marine Management Organisation and local Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs), are responsible for ensuring the MPAs are managed to protect their species and habitats, working with local fishing communities and other organisations.

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## [National recognition for project delivery at Sellafield](#)

News story

Our Project Delivery Directorate has won a top award from the Association for Project Management for its commitment to safety.



APM Awards 2020 winning entry.

The virtual awards took place early Monday evening, with the Health, Safety, Security and Environment Award coming our way against strong competition from organisations across the UK.

### [APM Awards 2020](#)

Neil Crewdson, Sellafield Ltd's Interim Project Delivery Director said:

This is a global awards ceremony showcasing projects success from the UK and across the world. We had 3 entries in the final, which is a recognition of the quality and scale of the work we carry out at Sellafield every day.

Winning awards of this nature, and being recognised by such a respected body as the APM, shows that our delivery performance and professional capability is UK leading.

This means we have now won 5 APM awards which is testament to the hard work and efforts of our team and supply chain partners. Our success demonstrates the ambition and capability of our teams working across the enterprise. This year has been unprecedented due to the coronavirus, yet as an organisation we have managed the risk and impact to the best of our ability – if any organisation can rise to this challenge, Sellafield Ltd can.

The 3 finalists from Sellafield Ltd were:

- Alpha Remediation (Engineering, Construction and Infrastructure project of the year – shortlisted)
- Beta Gamma Programme (Programme of the Year – shortlisted)
- Project Delivery Directorate – (HSSE Award – winner)

Sellafield Ltd was also featured in another award, with one of our employees Martin Parlett being part of the team which won Programme Management Office

of the year for the government of Montserrat.

You can read more about the awards [here](#).

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## **DfT publishes recommendations to deliver fairer deal for communities on HS2 property schemes**

An overhaul of how land and property is purchased for High Speed 2 (HS2) will deliver a fairer deal for communities impacted by the project, Transport Minister Andrew Stephenson announced today (Tuesday 17 November 2020), as he published a range of recommendations to improve acquisition processes.

The 36 proposals are the result of the Department for Transport's (DfT's) [HS2 land and property review](#) and pave the way for an improved system that focuses on better communication, more flexible compensation packages and tailored support for businesses.

The review was commissioned by the HS2 Minister after the government gave the green light to build the entire HS2 project, alongside a commitment to improve management and boost transparency, accountability and value to the taxpayer.

HS2 Minister Andrew Stephenson said:

When we gave HS2 the go-ahead, we vowed that we would strengthen our oversight and control to ensure this vital project is delivered at the right price, and that those impacted by its construction get a fairer deal.

As we build back better from COVID-19, these recommendations will ensure communities are treated with respect by establishing a more transparent compensation process and creating tailored support for businesses.

Work on implementing the recommendations will begin immediately, with priority given to those that will have the greatest impact as swiftly as possible.

Conducted over the summer, the review has been shaped by a number of key

stakeholders, MPs that represent constituencies along the route and HS2 Ltd. The review also includes the lessons learnt from Phase 1 of the project and considers the compensation arrangements of other infrastructure projects.

Among the recommendations published today are measures designed to speed up property valuations and disturbance payments, settle cases and disputes more quickly, and build on the improvements HS2 Ltd have introduced to engage more effectively with people.

Tony Mulhall, Associate Director, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, said:

We welcome the government's proposals published today. Recommending better communication around a complicated system, such as compulsory purchase, and giving more support to those who may not be familiar with the processes is a positive step.

RICS requires its professionals to always come to a fair and equitable outcome in a reasonable time frame that is to the benefit of all parties. Added government support for an improved faster and fairer system, with all sides adhering to established standards of good practice, can only be to the benefit of the communities along the routes and is something we fully support.

The new proposals will be taken into consideration as the government progresses plans for Phases 2a and 2b of the project, which will see the delivery of high-speed rail services to a new station at Manchester Piccadilly, and to Leeds via the East Midlands.

In September, HS2 Ltd announced that it had officially started construction on Phase 1 of the line, spearheading the creation of 22,000 jobs.

Last month, the company announced the creation of 412 new apprenticeship opportunities, as part of its [Skills, Employment and Education Strategy](#) to create at least 2,000 apprenticeships during the life span of the project.

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## **[Consultation launched on CMA Merger Assessment Guidelines](#)**

The updated Merger Assessment Guidelines will help ensure that the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) continues to protect consumers through its merger enforcement work as well as aiding companies and their advisers to assess whether competition concerns might be raised by the CMA before they enter into a deal or purchase.

The [CMA's current merger assessment guidelines](#) were published in 2010. Since then, markets have evolved and changed at a rapid pace, often making the act of assessing mergers more complex. The rise of digital technologies has also significantly changed the way that consumers behave and how businesses compete with one another.

The guidelines will build on recommendations made by the [Furman \(Unlocking digital competition: Report from the Digital Competition Expert Panel\)](#) and [Lear \(Ex-post Assessment of Merger Control Decisions in Digital Markets\)](#) reports in 2019 on how the CMA should approach its assessment of digital mergers; for example, an increased focus on the potential for future competition, and considering innovation and other non-price related effects when assessing whether there is likely to be a substantial lessening of competition. This will reflect the CMA's recent case experience and improve its merger enforcement within the existing legal framework.

Today's launch marks the second consultation on the CMA's merger guidance this month, following the updates to the CMA's [jurisdictional and procedural guidance \(CMA2\)](#) and the guidance on the CMA's [mergers intelligence function \(CMA56\)](#).

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive Officer of the Competition and Markets Authority, said:

"Our updated guidelines better reflect the way businesses, including online businesses, now compete as well as our own recent experiences of reviewing mergers in digital markets. New technologies have made markets even more dynamic and so we have had to re-think the way that we interrogate mergers in those sectors over the past ten years.

"These updated guidelines will help ensure that, through effective enforcement, consumers will continue to receive the best products and services possible without weakening competition or damaging future innovation."

Further details on the updated guidelines can be found in the [consultation document](#).

The CMA now welcomes views on the revised guidance documents from businesses, their legal and other advisers, and other interested parties by 8 January 2021.

Media queries should be directed to [press@cma.gov.uk](mailto:press@cma.gov.uk) or 020 3738 6460