

Microsoft / Activision deal could lead to competition concerns

Microsoft is 1 of 3 large companies, together with Sony and Nintendo, that have led the market for gaming consoles for the past 20 years with limited entries from new rivals. Activision Blizzard has some of the world's best-selling and most recognisable gaming franchises, such as Call of Duty and World of Warcraft. The CMA is concerned that if Microsoft buys Activision Blizzard it could harm rivals, including recent and future entrants into gaming, by refusing them access to Activision Blizzard games or providing access on much worse terms.

The CMA has also received evidence about the potential impact of combining Activision Blizzard with Microsoft's broader ecosystem. Microsoft already has a leading gaming console (Xbox), a leading cloud platform (Azure), and the leading PC operating system (Windows OS), all of which could be important to its success in cloud gaming. The CMA is concerned that Microsoft could leverage Activision Blizzard's games together with Microsoft's strength across console, cloud, and PC operating systems to damage competition in the nascent market for cloud gaming services.

The CMA considers that these concerns warrant an in-depth Phase 2 investigation. Microsoft and Activision Blizzard now have 5 working days to submit proposals to address the CMA's concerns. If suitable proposals are not submitted, the deal will be referred for a Phase 2 investigation.

Phase 2 investigations allow an independent panel of experts to probe in more depth the risks identified at Phase 1.

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

Following our Phase 1 investigation, we are concerned that Microsoft could use its control over popular games like Call of Duty and World of Warcraft post-merger to harm rivals, including recent and future rivals in multi-game subscription services and cloud gaming.

If our current concerns are not addressed, we plan to explore this deal in an in-depth Phase 2 investigation to reach a decision that works in the interests of UK gamers and businesses.

At Phase 2, the CMA appoints an independent panel to examine the deal in more depth and evaluate whether it is more likely than not that a substantial lessening of competition will occur as a result of the merger – a higher threshold than Phase 1. It typically builds on the work and evidence from Phase 1 with more third-party engagement via requests for information and use of its statutory powers in gathering internal documents. At Phase 2, the CMA will also carry out further in-depth review of the merging parties' internal

documents which show how they view competition and the market.

For more information, visit the [Microsoft / Activision case page](#).

1. For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.
2. Under the Enterprise Act 2002 (the Act) the CMA has a duty to make a reference to Phase 2 if the CMA believes that it is or may be the case that a relevant merger situation has been created, or arrangements are in progress or contemplation which, if carried into effect, will result in the creation of a relevant merger situation; and the creation of that situation has resulted, or may be expected to result, in a substantial lessening of competition with any markets or markets in the United Kingdom for goods or services.
3. Microsoft is a global technology company offering a wide range of products and services, with a global turnover of nearly £125 billion last year. Since 2001, it has sold various generations of Xbox gaming consoles. Gamers typically download digital copies of the games they want to play on Xbox from Microsoft's Xbox Store. Microsoft also offers a multi-game subscription service, Xbox Game Pass, where gamers pay a monthly fee to gain access to a library of games.
4. Activision Blizzard is a game developer and publisher with global turnover of £6.3 billion last year. It develops popular gaming content for consoles, PC, and mobile, which includes titles such as Call of Duty, World of Warcraft and Candy Crush.
5. The Phase 1 investigation identified a realistic prospect of SLCs (significant lessening of competition) in the following frames of reference in the UK: gaming consoles; multi-game subscription services; and cloud gaming services.

[UK steps up support for Pakistan's flood response](#)

The UK is providing further urgent life-saving support to Pakistan following devastating floods that have left a third of the country underwater, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss announced today (1 September 2022).

Humanitarian support totalling £15 million from the UK will help provide shelter and essential supplies to people across the country. The flooding has affected more than 33 million people, with 1,100 lives lost. The latest funding announced by the Foreign Secretary comes after the [UK provided £1.5 million to the disaster](#) last weekend.

Following the launch of the [Disasters Emergency Committee \(DEC\) Pakistan Floods Appeal](#) today (1 September 2022), the UK government has announced it will match pound for pound the first £5 million of public donations, as part of today's total £15 million pledge.

The rest of the UK funding of £10 million announced today will go to international aid agencies on the ground to help them respond to people's immediate needs, including through providing water, sanitation, shelter, protecting women and girls. It will also support families to repair their homes and maintain their livelihoods.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

The UK stands with Pakistan, as tens of millions of people face devastating floods, which have left a third of the country – an area roughly the size of the UK – underwater.

As a major humanitarian donor, we will do all we can to get life-saving aid to the most vulnerable, including through this £15 million package of support.

The Government of Pakistan and the UN launched a joint appeal on 30 August for \$160 million to help the long-term recovery. Early estimates of the damage suggest that it will have a \$10 billion impact.

Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, FCDO Minister of State for South and Central Asia, said:

We are seeing first-hand the tragic effects of climate change and the impact it is having on millions of people across the country. The UK is working around the clock with the Pakistan authorities to determine what support is required in the short-term and longer-term.

We are also working at pace with international organisations working directly on the ground to help victims of the disaster. These include the United Nations and World Bank. We will continue to work hand in hand with the international community to garner the best possible global support package for Pakistan to recover.

- according to Pakistan's National Disaster Management Agency, the flooding has damaged 950,000 houses and destroyed 287,000, with 500,000 people now living in relief camps. The disaster has also destroyed

3,000km of roads and damaged 7,566 schools. In total 745 health centres have been damaged or destroyed

- according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), over 800,000 livestock have been lost
- on Friday 26 August 2022, the UK was one of the first countries to [announce funding \(£1.5 million\) in response to the flooding](#)
- the [UK pledged over £55 million to partner with Pakistan](#) to fight climate change, manage water more sustainably and unlock climate investment in November 2021 during the COP26 Conference in Glasgow
- today's announcement of £15 million in humanitarian funding is an allocation from existing support to Pakistan and will go to the relief efforts in the areas worst-hit by the flooding. £5 million of the total £15 million amount will go to the [DEC Pakistan Floods Appeal](#)
- UK government match funding will double British public's own donations to the DEC appeal up to £5 million and will ensure that DEC member charities working on the ground can reach even more people in need. Donations can be made at www.dec.org.uk or by calling 0330 678 1000
- UK Aid Match has increased the impact of a number of DEC appeals, including most recently those for Ukraine and Afghanistan
- when large-scale disasters hit countries without the capacity to respond, the DEC brings together 15 leading UK aid charities to raise funds quickly and efficiently. The 10 DEC members responding so far to the flooding in Pakistan are: Action Against Hunger, Age International, British Red Cross, CAFOD, CARE International UK, Concern Worldwide UK, International Rescue Committee UK, Islamic Relief, Save the Children UK and Tearfund

[Report 09/2022: Collision between road-rail vehicles near Ramsden Bellhouse](#)

[R092022_220901_Ramsden_Bellhouse](#)

PDF, 6.91 MB, 33 pages

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Summary

On 2 May 2021, just before 07:00 hrs, two road-rail vehicles (RRVs) collided while travelling on the same track towards Wickford station from a location of work near Ramsden Bellhouse, Essex. The leading vehicle, a mobile elevating work platform (MEWP), was stationary at the time of the collision and was hit from behind at around 7.5 mph (12 km/h) by a road-rail machine, configured as a crane. The MEWP operator suffered life-changing injuries due to the collision.

Around 10 seconds before the collision, the MEWP operator had stopped to stow away a tool which was loose in the personnel basket of his machine. Around the same time, the operator of the crane became dazzled by the rising sun ahead. The crane operator turned to look out of the side window to relieve his eyes but did not apply the brakes of the crane when he did so, resulting in the collision with the MEWP.

Before the collision, the crane operator had allowed the gap between the crane and the MEWP to reduce so that, when the MEWP stopped, it was only about 30 metres. Network Rail standards require operators to maintain a minimum separation distance of 100 metres when travelling in convoy with other vehicles. The shortened separation distance in this case reduced the time that the crane operator had to observe and react to the obstruction ahead.

Fatigue was a possible factor in this accident, as the crane operator had not taken advantage of the opportunity to rest before the nightshift at a hotel provided by his employers. He had also not declared his actual travel time when providing his journey details at the site access control point.

A possible underlying factor was the lack of clarity in the role of machine controllers during travelling movements. This may have contributed to a lack of warning of the impending collision from the crane controller, who was riding in the cab with the crane operator.

A similar collision occurred at Wellingborough on 15 August 2019. The industry's investigation into that accident found that the machine operators involved had been regularly ignoring the need to maintain an adequate separation between vehicles. Although action was taken to modify behaviours, site inspection procedures were not revised to assure compliance and RAIB found that the plan for the work being undertaken on 1 to 2 May 2021 did not explicitly cover the need for suitable distances to be maintained. Not applying learning from this previous accident is also a possible underlying factor.

Recommendations

RAIB has made three recommendations. Two of these are addressed to Network Rail and include the need to clarify the role of a machine controller when they are travelling with their vehicle, as well as the need to continue the development of obstacle detection for road-rail vehicles. A third recommendation is made to SPL Powerlines UK and Readypower Rail Services

relating to the application of learning from previous accidents and incidents.

RAIB has also identified four learning points. These alert operators to the need for bringing vehicles to a stand when forward vision is lost, and the importance of judging and observing the correct safe distance between moving vehicles. It is also important that staff are fit and appropriately prepared when reporting for duty and comply with all road-rail vehicle operating instructions.

Andrew Hall, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents said:

Sadly, this readily-avoided accident led to a member of railway staff sustaining life changing injuries.

Bright sunlight can temporarily dazzle or obscure vision. It is important that those driving vehicles by line of sight, slow sufficiently or stop if visibility becomes poor. Even momentary dazzling can lead to an unsafe situation rapidly developing.

When operating rail-road machines on the railway it is essential to maintain the defined safe distance of 100 metres with other moving vehicles. This accident involved differential speeds dangerously reducing the distance between the vehicles from 90 metres to approximately 30 metres during the journey. Recognising the true distances involved, as well as the potential consequence of road-rail vehicles travelling in convoy at different speeds, is vital to maintaining safe distances between vehicles.

What is particularly frustrating about this accident, is that lessons from a previous accident involving the same contractor had not been learned. Both accidents shared similar factors including a lack of adequate separation between vehicles, a loss of attention and avoiding action not being taken. Not applying these lessons to improve planning of work or the site assurance processes was an opportunity missed to avoid a collision with severe consequences.

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.

Newsdate: 1 September 2022

[Folic acid added to flour to prevent brain and spinal conditions in foetuses](#)

- Defra launches UK-wide consultation on the Bread and Flour Regulations on the amount of folic acid to be added to flour
- Under the government's proposals, pregnancies affected by neural tube defects could fall by more than a fifth

The number of pregnancies affected by life-threatening issues such as spina bifida could fall by more than a fifth as the government moves one step closer to actively adding folic acid to non-wholemeal flour.

Following a consultation with industry and stakeholders on whether to add folic acid to non-wholemeal flour, a public health policy which has already been successful in Australia, New Zealand and Canada, today the government is consulting on its proposal to add 250 micrograms of folic acid per 100 grams of flour.

The proposal on the amount of folic acid to be added to flour is part of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) consultation on the Bread and Flour Regulations, which aims to ensure the regulations are consistent with other food standards legislation.

Neural tube defects are a rare developmental condition which occurs very early in pregnancy and affects around 1,000 pregnancies each year in the UK. This occurs when the brain, spine, or spinal cord do not develop properly in the womb and can cause life-threatening health issues.

Women are advised to take a daily 400-microgram folic acid supplement before conceiving and up to the 12th week of pregnancy as it reduces the risk of neural tube defects affected pregnancies. However, as pregnancies may be unplanned or women in the first few weeks of pregnancy may not know they are pregnant, many women may be unaware of this recommendation.

Adding folic acid will mean foods made with flour, such as bread, will actively help avoid around 200 neural tube defects each year – around 20% of the annual UK total.

Defra Food Minister Victoria Prentis said:

It is vital that we consult on this issue to understand views on all of our proposed amendments to bread and flour regulations.

Folic acid fortification is an example of how we can ensure the public receive the nutrition we require through everyday food products.

The government's Bread and Flour Regulations consultation proposes adding 250 micrograms of folic acid per 100 grams of non-wholemeal flour.

Minister for Public Health Maggie Throup said:

Neural tube defects can have a devastating impact on life expectancy and quality of life.

This simple step will ensure more women who might be pregnant, or who are trying to conceive, will have increased intakes of folic acid, leading to a large reduction in the number of fetuses affected by NTDs each year.

I want to encourage anyone with an interest in this issue to participate in the consultation and help us deliver life-saving changes.

The proposal forms part of a UK-wide consultation on the Bread and Flour Regulations which aims to support UK industry, help lead to improved public health outcomes, assist enforcement authorities and protect UK consumers. It will ensure the regulations are consistent with other food standards legislation, covering the specifications of vitamins and minerals added to foods.

The consultation opens on Thursday 1 September and closes on Wednesday 23 November. It is open to everyone and is available here:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/food-compositional-standards/bread-and-flour-consultation-2022>

Cefnogi recriwtio mwy diogel yn y sector blynyddoedd cynnar ac addysg

News story

Mae ymgyrch 'Gwneud Recriwtio'n Fwy Diogel' Y Gwasanaeth Datgelu a Gwahardd yn hyrwyddo'r cymorth sydd ar gael gan ein gwasanaeth Allgymorth Rhanbarthol.



Mae'r Gwasanaeth Datgelu a Gwahardd (Disclosure and Barring Service – DBS) wedi lansio cam diweddaraf yr ymgyrch 'Gwneud Recriwtio'n Fwy Diogel'. Anelir y cam yma o'r ymgyrch at y sector blynyddoedd cynnar ac addysg ac mae'n amlygu'r ystod o gyngor am ddim a hyfforddiant sydd ar gael i sefydliadau o bob maint. Mae cyngor a hyfforddiant yn amrywio o gynnwys gwiriadau Datgelu a Gwahardd a chymhwysedd, i'r ddyletswydd gyfreithiol i wneud atgyfeiriad i wahardd, a sut i wneud atgyfeiriad.

Mae'r Gwasanaeth wedi ymuno gyda sefydliadau partner yn y blynyddoedd cynnar ac addysg sydd wedi elwa o gymorth y DBS yn flaenorol, i helpu hyrwyddo'r ymgyrch i gyflogwyr eraill yn y sector. Mae partneriaid yn cynnwys [Blynyddoedd Cynnar Cymru](#), [PACEY – y Gymdeithas Broffesiynol ar gyfer Gofal Plant a'r Blynyddoedd Cynnar](#), [Hyfforddiant Estio](#) ac [EPM](#).

Lansiwyd yr ymgyrch 'Gwneud Recriwtio'n Fwy Diogel' yn wreiddiol ym mis Mehefin 2022 ac mae wedi targedu'r sectorau elusennol a ffydd yn flaenorol.

Dyweddodd Eric Robinson, Prif Weithredwr y Gwasanaeth Datgelu a Gwahardd:

Mae'r Gwasanaeth Datgelu a Gwahardd yn cyflawni rôl hanfodol wrth helpu i amddiffyn plant, pobl ifanc ac oedolion agored i niwed drwy gefnogi cyflogwyr i wneud penderfyniadau recriwtio mwy diogel. Mae'n bleser gennym lansio ein hymgyrch newydd gyda'r sector blynyddoedd cynnar ac addysg i dynnu sylw at yr hyfforddiant a chyngor am ddim y gallwn eu darparu i sefydliadau drwy ein gwasanaeth Allgymorth Rhanbarthol.

Mae'r gwasanaeth hwn yn darparu un pwynt cyswllt i sefydliadau ar gyfer pob ymholiad a chwestiwn yn ymwneud â'r DBS, yn ogystal â'r cyfle i gael mynediad at hyfforddiant DBS sydd wedi'i deilwra ar gyfer eu staff a'u gwirfoddolwyr. Mae'r tîm hefyd yn coladu adborth er mwyn sicrhau y gellir gwneud gwelliannau yn y dyfodol i wasanaethau a phrosesau'r DBS.

Dysgwch fwy am yr ymgyrch ar gyfryngau cymdeithasol drwy chwilio am [#DBSMakingRecruitmentSafer](#).

Gellir dod o hyd i fwy o wybodaeth am wasanaeth Allgymorth Rhanbarthol y DBS yn ein [canllawiau allgymorth](#).

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