

Construction materials deal raises competition concerns

Breedon Group plc (Breedon) and Cemex Investments Limited (Cemex) are 2 of the leading producers and distributors of construction materials in the UK and Ireland. Breedon announced in January 2020 that it had agreed a £178 million deal to buy approximately 100 Cemex sites, including aggregates quarries, ready-mixed concrete facilities, asphalt plants and a cement terminal, across the UK.

All of these materials are widely used in the UK construction industry as essential components in the construction of roads, buildings and other infrastructure.

Following its initial Phase 1 investigation, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) found that the deal gives rise to competition concerns in relation to the supply of ready-mixed concrete, non-specialist aggregates or asphalt in 15 local markets across the UK. In all of these local markets, the 2 businesses currently have a large presence and compete closely, with limited competition from other suppliers.

The CMA has also found that the merger could make it easier for cement suppliers in the East of Scotland to align their behaviour, without necessarily entering into any express agreement or direct communication, in a way that limits the rivalry between them. The CMA found that this could result in cement suppliers competing less strongly for certain customers in the region.

The CMA is therefore concerned that the deal could result in a substantial lessening of competition, leading to higher prices and lower quality building materials for UK construction projects.

Colin Raftery, CMA Senior Director said:

“These products are widely used in a range of building projects across the UK, and account for a material part of the construction costs faced by businesses and public bodies. As the majority of these materials are sourced locally, it’s vital to ensure that enough competition will remain at the local level so there’s enough choice and prices remain fair.

“While sufficient competition will remain in most areas, we are concerned that the deal could result in high prices and lower quality products in some areas where Breedon wouldn’t face sufficient competition.”

Breedon and Cemex must now address the CMA’s concerns within five working days. If they are unable to do so, the merger will be referred for an in-depth Phase 2 investigation.

For more information, visit the Breedon Group plc/Cemex Investments Limited merger inquiry [web page](#).

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

[Update on face coverings in schools](#)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) published [a new statement](#) on the 21 August on when children should wear face coverings. They now advise that “children aged 12 and over should wear a mask under the same conditions as adults, in particular when they cannot guarantee at least a 1-metre distance from others and there is widespread transmission in the area.”

As a result, the government is revising its guidance on face coverings for staff and children in Year 7 or above in England. Nationwide, while the government is not recommending face coverings are necessary, schools will have the discretion to require face coverings in communal areas if they believe that is right in their particular circumstances.

In addition, and consistent with WHO’s new advice, the government will advise additional measures are taken in areas where the transmission of the virus is high. In these areas, defined as areas of national government intervention as [listed on gov.uk](#), the government’s guidance will state face coverings should be worn by adults and pupils in secondary schools when moving around the school, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing is difficult to maintain. It will not be necessary to wear face coverings in the classroom, where protective measures already mean the risks are lower, and where they can inhibit learning.

This revised approach will also apply to further education colleges and will be reflected in guidance to universities, but not to children in primary schools where the risks to children are lower. Updated guidance on face coverings in all education settings will be published shortly and will come into effect from 1 September.

Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson said:

Our priority is to get children back to school safely. At each stage we have listened to the latest medical and scientific advice. We have therefore decided to follow the World Health Organisation’s new advice. In local lockdown areas children in year 7 and above should wear face coverings in communal spaces. Outside of local lockdown areas face coverings won’t be required in schools, though schools will have the flexibility to introduce measures if they believe it is right in their specific circumstances. I hope these steps will provide parents, pupils and teachers with further reassurance.

Consistent with WHO's advice, if the rate of transmission increases across the whole country, it may be necessary to apply stricter guidance on face coverings in schools nationally. This is not necessary at the moment but the government will keep the evidence on transmission under constant review.

Securing peace between Israel and the Palestinians

Thank you, Mr President, and thank you to Mr Mladenov for his briefing.

Mr President, as others have done, I would like to say a few words about Lebanon. The devastating explosion in Beirut has caused enormous suffering and damage, as Mr Mladenov also set out. Our sympathies go out to all those who have been affected by this tragedy and who have lost loved ones. The UK stands with the Lebanese people in this hour of need. Our 25 million pound package of humanitarian support, as well as our technical experts who were deployed within days of the explosion, will help to address some of the critical needs of the most vulnerable in Lebanon. And the deployment of HMS Enterprise, one of our naval ships, on the 10th of August, also complements these efforts. Our support to the Lebanese army in their efforts to respond to the disaster is also critical.

Turning to the topic of today's discussion, Mr President, I would like to start by welcoming the announcement on the 13th of August, as set out by Ambassador Kelly, of the normalisation of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and, in particular, the suspension of Israel's plans to annex parts of the West Bank.

As my Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary have said, this is an historic step which sees the normalisation of relations between two great friends of the United Kingdom. The UK has consistently made clear in this Council our firm opposition to annexation, which would have been contrary to international law, counterproductive to securing peace in the region and a severe blow to the prospects of the two-state solution. We therefore profoundly hope that this moment can be used as a step towards direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians, as there can be no substitute for direct talks in order to reach a two-state solution and a lasting peace.

My Foreign Secretary is in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories today, encouraging both leaders to push forward on this momentum of this announcement. The UK stands ready to support this endeavour.

Mr President, despite this positive development, we are concerned by other negative trends on the ground. The number of Covid-19 cases continues to rise across the region. Meanwhile, Hamas has been launching IEDs and firing rockets into Israel. Such actions by Hamas are unacceptable, and we call on

them to cease immediately.

The current situation continues to have a devastating impact on the people living in Gaza in particular. As ever, dialogue can be the only way to address the situation. We call on Israel to lift movement and access restrictions and allow fuel to enter Gaza, which is vital to power hospitals, water and sewage treatment. More broadly, we encourage the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel to urgently resume cooperation across all files – security, economic and civil – at this critical time.

While the shadow of annexation appears to be lifted, we remain concerned about the potential for further settlement advancements, continued demolitions and evictions. Mr President, we are also concerned by continued acts of violence and we're alarmed to hear of the shooting on the 17th of August at Qalandiya checkpoint of a Palestinian who was unarmed and deaf. The use of lethal force should only be deployed as a last resort.

I would like to finish by reiterating the UK's longstanding position on the Middle East peace process. We support a negotiated settlement leading to a safe and secure Israel living alongside a viable and sovereign Palestinian based on 1967 borders with agreed land swaps, Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states and a just, fair, agreed and realistic settlement for refugees. The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting such efforts towards peace in the Middle East.

Thank you, Mr President.

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Many thanks, Mr President, and thank you for your brief update to the Council just now, with which the UK concurs. I want to say a few other things. The first is that the UK remains resolutely committed to full implementation of Security Council Resolution 2231, through which the JCPOA was endorsed in 2015. This is in order to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, our priority. In order to preserve the JCPOA, Iran must return to nuclear compliance without delay. Along with our E3 partners, France and Germany, we urge Iran to engage urgently and constructively with the dispute resolution mechanism. As E3 Foreign Ministers set out in their statements on the 19th of June and the 20th of August, we do not support a move to snapback at this time, which would be incompatible with our current efforts to preserve the JCPOA.

With regard to the question of my Russian colleague on the letter set out by the United States on the 20th of August and your own summary, Mr President, I would like to align with the position expressed by France and Germany. It is the UK's opinion that the United States ceased to be a participant to the JCPOA following their withdrawal from the deal on the 8th of May, 2018. Our position regarding the effectiveness of the United States' notification pursuant to Resolution 2231 has been very clearly explained to you the Presidency, and all Council members.

I would like to also make clear that we share the United States' concern about the expiry of the arms restrictions on Iran in October this year. As E3

Foreign Ministers have said, the expiry of the restrictions could have serious implications for regional security, given Iran's continued destabilising activities. The last UN Secretary-General report, which the Council discussed back in June, detailed how Iran has continued to violate Security Council Resolution 2231, Annex B, including through illicit arms transfers in the region, ballistic missile proliferation and attacks on its neighbours.

The United Kingdom will continue to enforce remaining restrictions rigorously, including on the proliferation of arms to non-state actors covered by other Security Council resolutions, ballistic missile restrictions under Annex B, and the EU-UK arms embargoes that will remain in place until 2023. We continue to work with the remaining JCPOA participants and this council to seek a path forward to address arms restriction expiry in October.

[Wild polio wiped out in Africa with UK aid support](#)

UK efforts to stop wild polio in Africa have contributed to the continent being officially declared free from the disease, which can kill or maim children for life.

Today's announcement by the World Health Organization follows no new wild polio cases being registered across the continent for four years. Wild polio was previously the predominant cause of the disease and the polio vaccine protects individuals against this form of the virus. Just 25 years ago polio was paralysing an estimated 75,000 children a year in Africa.

The UK is one of the top donors to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), which has vaccinated millions of children against polio in the world's poorest countries. As a result of their work more than 18 million people are able to walk who would otherwise have been paralysed by the virus. Support from the UK has helped 220 million children across 47 countries in Africa.

Last year, the UK committed funding to vaccinate more than 400 million children against polio across the world every year until 2023. It will save an estimated 650,000 children from life-long paralysis every year and support over 20 million staff and volunteers worldwide to deliver polio vaccination and broader health services to communities for those affected by the disease.

The funding will help provide large scale immunisations for children in high risk countries like Pakistan and Afghanistan, where wild polio yet to be eradicated. It will also support work across Africa where there have been increasing outbreaks of vaccine-derived poliovirus which continue to paralyse children.

In June, the Prime Minister hosted the Global Vaccine Summit which raised over \$8.8bn to vaccinate 300 million more children in the world's poorest countries against diseases including measles, polio and cholera. The UK is also funding international efforts to develop a safe, workable coronavirus vaccine that will be available throughout the world – as the biggest country donor to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations.

International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

Thirty years ago, over 100 countries had wild polio. Now, every country in Africa is free from the disease – in large part thanks to UK aid helping to vaccinate children and strengthen health systems across the continent – so no child need suffer again. This outstanding achievement shows what the world can achieve when we work together to tackle global health crises.

There is still work to do and the UK will keep working to end all types of polio to prevent people suffering from this debilitating disease.

August 2019 marked three consecutive years since Nigeria, the last African country with wild polio, had a case of wild poliovirus. Since then the Africa Regional Certification Commission for Polio Eradication, an independent body of experts, has reviewed data from across the continent, concluding in today's announcement.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are now the only two countries with endemic polio. Vaccination campaigns in both countries have now resumed after being paused during coronavirus lockdowns. Until wild polio is eliminated in every country, there is a risk it could spread across borders and proliferate again.

The UK is also funding international efforts to develop a safe, workable coronavirus vaccine that will be available throughout the world – as the biggest country donor to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI).

Notes to editors

- The Africa Regional Certification Commission (ARCC) for Polio Eradication accepted documentation of wild poliovirus-free status from all 47 countries after completing the official field verification process necessary to declare the entire region wild polio-free.
- Parts of Africa are still facing the increasing spread of vaccine-derived poliovirus which can occur in areas of poor sanitation when populations are under immunised.
- In 2019, the UK committed £400 million for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative from 2020 to 2023.

Over 64 million meals claimed for as Eat Out to Help Out enters fourth week

- new figures today show that restaurants have claimed for more than 64 million discounted meals as Eat Out to Help Out enters its fourth week
- upward trend in meals claimed for shows millions continue to flock to eat out to support 1.8 million jobs in the hospitality sector – which has been hit hard by coronavirus
- 87,000 claims have been made by restaurants taking part in the scheme

This continues the upward trend in the scheme's popularity, with 10.5 million meals claimed for in the first week, growing to a total of 35 million meals in the second.

Data from OpenTable shows that during Eat Out to Help Out's third week the number of customers at UK restaurants was 61% higher than the same days last year on average for Monday to Wednesday. The average level across Monday to Wednesday in the first and second week were 12% and 41% respectively.

The data also shows that the number of customers at UK restaurants was up 17% compared to the same week in 2019.

A total of 87,000 claims have been made by many of the signed-up businesses and there have been over 34 million searches on Eat Out to Help Out's restaurant finder from 13 million unique users.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:

Today's figures continue to show that Brits are backing hospitality – with more than 64 million meals discounted so far, that's equivalent to nearly every person in the country dining out to protect jobs.

This scheme has reminded us how much we love to dine out, and in doing so, how this is helping to protect the jobs of nearly 2 million people who work in hospitality.

I am urging everyone, where they can, to continue to safely enjoy a meal while the scheme remains open.

There are now 84,000 sign-ups from restaurants for the scheme, which closes on 31 August.

The Eat Out to Help Out scheme aims to help protect the jobs of the hospitality industry's 1.8 million employees by encouraging people to safely return to their local restaurants, cafes and pubs where social-distancing

rules allow.

Around 80% of hospitality firms stopped trading in April, with 1.4 million workers furloughed, the highest of any sector.

David Page, Chairman of Fulham Shore (Franco Manca/The Real Greek) said:

The Government's furlough scheme underpinned our effort to save as many jobs as possible at Franco Manca and The Real Greek.

This innovative policy was then followed by the Eat Out to Help Out scheme.

Eat Out to Help Out immediately increased our restaurant customer numbers by over 50%, thus enabling us to get all our staff back to work. In fact, we are now creating new jobs by hiring and training more people as fast as we can!

Andy Laurillard, CEO, Giggling Squid said:

Rishi's dishes have been a massive hit with customers and our staff. The tremendous success of the August scheme, combined with the temporary VAT reduction and fantastic support from our landlord community have made the difference between failure and survival of our business.

As a result of the Eat Out to Help Out scheme we have managed to avoid making any redundancies and we no longer have any of our 950 staff on furlough.

The scheme applies to all food and non-alcoholic drinks with participating establishments deducting 50% from the bill, up to a maximum discount per person of £10. It could save a family of four up to £40 per meal.

Businesses have become Covid-secure through, for example, protective screens, contactless payments, social distancing, one way walking systems, online bookings and reduced capacity.

The scheme is one part of the Chancellor's Plan for Jobs, announced last month. Other measures announced to protect, support and create jobs include cutting VAT for tourism and hospitality by 15%, a £2 billion Kickstart Scheme and an £8.8 billion investment in new infrastructure, decarbonisation and maintenance projects.

This support for the hospitality sector comes on top of the government's unprecedented assistance for all businesses including through grants, tax deferrals, scrapping business rates, the furlough and self-employed support schemes and government-backed loans.

Further information