

CMA finds concerns in drinking water solutions merger

Press release

The CMA has found that the anticipated purchase of Waterlogic by Culligan could lead to a loss of competition in the supply of multifunctional taps to business customers in the UK.



Image credit: CMA

Culligan (mainly through its Zip brand) is the leading supplier of multifunctional taps to business customers – such as offices – in the UK. Waterlogic (through its Billi brand) is one of Culligan’s main competitors.

Unlike traditional taps, multifunctional taps can provide chilled, hot or boiling and, depending on the model, sparkling water. They offer an easy-to-use solution for businesses, that want to provide drinking water solutions in the workplace that are better for the environment than disposable bottles.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is concerned that this merger would leave just three large suppliers of multifunctional taps to business customers in the UK, which could lead to higher prices or lower quality of service.

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

Multifunctional taps are an increasingly popular option for employers who need to make drinking water readily available to employees and want to reduce waste. By removing a key player that offers this product, this deal could lead to higher costs to businesses and lower quality service.

If the merging businesses can offer a suitable way to address this issue, then we won’t need to move to a more in-depth investigation.

Culligan and Waterlogic have now 5 working days to submit proposals to address the CMA's competition concerns. If suitable proposals are not submitted, the deal will be referred for an in-depth Phase 2 investigation.

For more information, [visit the Culligan and Waterlogic merger inquiry page](#).

1. For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.
2. There are 2 routes by which the CMA may come to review a merger (details of which can be found in the CMA's [quick mergers guidance](#), paragraph 2.5). Businesses can formally notify a merger to the CMA by completing a Merger Notice or the CMA's Merger's Intelligence Committee can investigate mergers that have not been notified to it.
3. Under the Enterprise Act 2002 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 within any market or markets in the United Kingdom for goods or services.

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[Crime news: 2022 crime contract uploads and October duty rotas](#)

News story

2022 crime contracts are now being uploaded into Contracted Work and Administration and we have published duty solicitor membership lists starting 1 October.



Crime contracts are now being uploaded into Contracted Work and Administration (CWA) for all applicants who:

At present 90% of providers who were offered a contract subject to verification have completed their pre-contract checks.

Contract acceptances and October rotas

We are asking all applicants to accept their contract by no later than 11.59pm on 4 September if they wish to be added to the October rota.

Notifications will be sent through CWA containing a link to the page to accept the contract. Successful applicants will also be notified through the Bravo message board system that their contract is ready for acceptance.

Guidance on how to accept the contract, and what to do if you need to set up a designatory signatory, is available on GOV.UK – see below.

What if I miss the deadline?

During August 2022, we will be inviting all organisations which completed pre-contract checks but missed the October rota deadline to join the January rotas.

Providers on the October rota wishing to refresh their duty solicitor details for the January rotas will have until early October to do this via a separate process. We will publish full details of how this process will work by the end of August 2022.

Further contract uploads

We will be making further crime contract uploads when the remaining applicants complete their pre-contract checks.

Details of crime contract holders

We will publish details during October 2022 of all organisations holding contracts for duty solicitor and own client work from the contract start date of 1 October.

Further information

[CWA detailed user guides](#) – to download guidance on accepting contracts and setting up designated signatories

[Duty solicitor October membership lists](#)

[LAA eTendering system](#) – to access Bravo message boards

help@bravosolution.co.uk – for technical questions about eTendering or call 0800 069 8630 from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday

[Standard Crime Contract 2022](#) – contract documents for providers

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[Record numbers of 18-year-olds take up their place at university](#)

Nearly 180,000 18-year-old students in England have had their place at their first choice of university confirmed. This is the largest number ever on record for an examination year, a 20% increase on 2019, when exams were last sat.

Overall, 425,830 students of all ages and domiciles will be going onto university, including a record number of 18-year-olds from a disadvantaged background for an examination year. The gap between the most and least advantaged progressing to university has narrowed to a record low (from 2.29 in 2019 to 2.26 in 2022, and from 2.32 in 2021).

The first cohort of T level students received their results today, with over 92% achieving a pass or above. Many have already secured their first job or an apprenticeship in areas like mechanics and digital product design, and 370 students, 71% of those who applied, have so far been placed onto a university course, demonstrating the flexibility and appeal of these courses.

This is the first year that students have taken summer exams since 2019. As part of the Ofqual transition period back to pre-pandemic grades, AS, A level and Vocational and Technical Qualification results received today will be higher than in 2019 in recognition of the disruption students experienced during their exam years.

Exams were taken with support and adaptations in place, including advance information of topics for A levels, and longer assessment windows for vocational and technical qualifications.

Grades will be lower than 2021 when exams did not go ahead and grades were determined by teachers, as schools and colleges remained closed to most pupils until March.

36% of entries for A levels are at grade A or above in the UK – up from 25% in 2019, and down from 45% in 2021, reflecting the target set out last autumn.

Statistics published today also show:

- 83% of entries for A levels are at grade C or above – up from 76% in 2019, and down from 89% in 2021, reflecting the target set out last autumn.
- The gap between the proportion of top grades (A*, A and above and B and above) in independent schools and academies in England has narrowed compared to 2021.
- 92.2% of T Level students in receipt of results this year achieved a Pass or above, with 31.9% achieving a Distinction and 2.7% a Distinction*.
- Over 240,000 certificates awarded to a wide range of students who have undertaken Level 3 vocational and technical qualifications used for progression in a similar way to A levels, with results broadly similar to previous years.
- 87.7% of undergraduates for this year at UK universities are from the UK compared to 12.3% of international students. This compares to 14.7% of international students in 2019.

Education Secretary James Cleverly said:

I want to congratulate students getting their results today and say a big thank you to the teachers who helped them get to this point. These students have experienced unprecedented disruption over the last couple of years, and such excellent results are a testament to their resilience and hard work.

Our plan this year was to ensure that students could sit their exams for the first time since 2019, be graded fairly and move on to the next stage of their lives as we return to normality after the pandemic.

We have now seen the largest number of students on record for an examination year – including a record 23,220 of disadvantaged 18-year-olds – going on to university, while many others will take their next steps in further training or the world of work.

Regardless of what those next steps are, I wish all students the very best on this exciting new chapter in their lives.

179,690 18-year-olds in England gained their first choice of university place, 21,670 their insurance. This compares to 149,670 getting their first choice and 19,300 getting their insurance choice in 2019.

The government has been working with the higher education sector to ensure that universities have been making offers that reflect the grades students have received today.

Universities have been encouraged to be flexible in their decision-making on admissions for students who narrowly miss their grades or terms of their offer and they have a wealth of experience supporting young people throughout the application process, including through the changing circumstances with recent results cycles.

Medicine and Dentistry are hugely competitive courses, and consistently have far more applicants than there are places available. Despite more cautious offer making this year so universities can avoid oversubscription, the government expects all places on these courses to be filled for 2022/23.

For those students going onto higher education in September from the lowest-income households, on top of the standard cost of living support package, the government has continued to increase support for living costs on an annual basis. This means that these students now have access to the largest ever amounts in cash terms. The government also asked the Office for Students to protect the £256 million available to support disadvantaged students and those in the need for the current financial year.

If students have not received the grades they were hoping for, a record number of places are available through UCAS, as well as a range of high quality vocational and technical options. Students can call the National Careers Service on 0800 100 900 for advice on their next steps.

To help future students recover from the impact of the pandemic the government has invested nearly £5 billion including £1.5 billion for the National Tutoring Programme. Over two million courses have now started through the National Tutoring Programme, including 1.8 million so far this academic year across an estimated 80% of schools.

The Department for Education and Ofqual will evaluate the arrangements this year, before finalising 2023 arrangements as early as possible in autumn. The intention is to return to the carefully designed and well-established pre-pandemic exam arrangements as quickly as possible, given they are the best and fairest way of assessing what students know and can do.

Unless otherwise stated all figures refer to England domicile.

[Performance update – August 2022](#)

News story

On a monthly basis, we publish the latest official statistics on appeals performance, which represent the highest volume (in terms of number of cases) of the work of the Planning Inspectorate.



Alongside this, we update the [appeals handling times data](#) to give customers the latest information on the average time it takes to receive a decision.

In summary:

- The number of open cases rose to 13,988 by the end of July. We are currently receiving more cases than we can decide, though we issued 1,426 decisions in July which was 232 more than the previous month. We continue to focus on casework with the most community interest and those key to supporting the nation's economic recovery, such as national infrastructure applications, local plan examinations and appeals needing a hearing or inquiry. We encourage appellants to work closely with their local planning authorities and other interested parties to resolve issues locally and help to reduce pressure on the appeals system.
- [New Ministerial performance Measures](#) for The Planning Inspectorate were announced earlier this year, with an expectation we reduce average decision times. From April we implemented a faster process for planning appeals requiring a hearing and the first cases heard in the improved process are now being issued within the 24-26 weeks we are aiming for. Decision times for appeals by inquiry remain positive with a median time of 31 weeks in July 2022. We will continue to work to speed up decision times whilst maintaining the standards of our decisions.
- Since the new measures were adopted, we have been working to find better ways of presenting our performance data to make it clearer and more user-friendly. This month, alongside our usual [performance statistics format, we have published an experimental data set](#), focusing on a small number of the new Ministerial measures. Any feedback on the presentation is very welcome and should be sent to statistics@planninginspectorate.gov.uk
- They show that the number of appeals submitted that were valid on first submission between April and June 2022 (61.2%) was a slight improvement on the previous three months (59.8%), but we have ambitions to increase this significantly. We are currently working with local planning authorities on a project to improve our digital services, including making it clearer for appellants how to use the appeal service. This

should reduce the number of incomplete appeals which cause delays. [Follow this guide](#) carefully when submitting an appeal so that your case is not delayed and more of our time is spent on progressing appeals.

- Alongside the focus on speeding up decisions we remain committed to retaining and improving the quality of decision making. The experimental statistics show between April and June 2022, 831 appeal cases were quality assured. This represents 22% of all decisions issued and includes 598 by Inspectors in Training as part of their learning.
- There are currently 62 local plan examinations in progress and many [Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects \(NSIPs\)](#) at various stages of their progress through the planning system. They include 69 national infrastructure schemes where we are providing advice before submission, 12 applications are being considered by us and there are 11 proposals where we have completed our recommendations and the Secretary of State's decision is awaited. These are vital to the ongoing support by The Planning Inspectorate to the country's economic recovery.

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[Package of measures introduced to improve air quality](#)

Press release

Series of actions have been announced to improve air quality introduced under the Environment Act



- National Highways to work with local authorities to improve air quality
- Local Air Quality Guidance strengthened under the Environment Act
- Technical guidance also updated to support local air quality action

Local councils will have a new strengthened framework to improve air quality,

under new plans announced by Defra today (18 August).

Using powers in the Environment Act, National Highways is to become the first designated “Relevant Public Authority” placing a legal requirement on it to work together with local councils when necessary to take effective action to deliver air quality standards and objectives. While National Highways already work with local authorities to improve air quality, this statutory requirement – consulted on earlier this year – will see a more consistent approach to meeting local air quality objectives on road networks.

In addition to this, Defra has updated [Local Air Quality Management \(LAQM\) Policy Guidance](#) to reflect legislative changes introduced through the Environment Act 2021 and clarify roles and responsibilities within local government.

Following consultation feedback, the guidance will be amended to include:

- A new requirement for local Air Quality Action Plans to include a timeline of clear actions that ensure Air Quality Objectives (pollution concentration limits) are met and air quality standards improve in local areas.
- The requirement for an Air Quality Management Area to be declared within 12 months of identifying an exceedance of the air quality objectives to ensure that local councils develop Air Quality Actions Plans more quickly.
- The requirement for local authorities to produce an Air Quality Action Plan within 18 months of declaring an Air Quality Management Area.
- A new reminder and warning alert system to increase local council compliance with reporting on actions they are taking to improve air quality.

The Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) Technical Guidance, which is designed to support local authorities in carrying out their duties under the Environment Act, has also been updated to reflect the legislative changes introduced through the Environment Act 2021.

Environment Minister Steve Double, said:

“These changes – delivered by our Environment Act – provide a strengthened framework for local councils to meet their air quality objectives, and will ensure that communities are protected sooner with real improvements to the air we breathe.”

[Full guidance on Local Air Quality Management](#) is available on our dedicated website.

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