

# Update on Fisheries Response Fund: Further payment for eligible businesses

News story

Qualifying businesses will receive a further and final payment under the Fisheries Response Fund. A £10 million fund announced by the government in response to Covid-19.



Picture of the coast looking out to sea

Qualifying fishing and aquaculture businesses will receive a further and final payment from the government's £10 million Fisheries Response Fund.

[Eligible businesses](#) will be contacted by the Marine Management Organisation and payments will be made directly into business accounts by June 15.

So far more than 1200 fishing and aquaculture businesses have received payments from the Fund for April and May. The payment for June is the final payment from this Fund.

The Fund included £1m for the Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme, a grant scheme for projects to support the sale and consumption of locally caught fish. A joint endeavour between Defra, Cefas, the fishing industry and MMO, the first successful projects were awarded grants this week. The judging panel is due to review further projects on 8 June.

The Fund has been welcomed by the fishing industry which warned of businesses closing unless help was provided.

Tom McCormack, CEO, MMO, said: "We mobilised quickly to be able to put both of these funds in place and ensure the cash from the Treasury and the Maritime and Fisheries Fund was invested directly into the fishing industry at the earliest opportunity."

Please see [MMO's guide](#) to further assistance and support available the fishing industry.

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## [Webinar: Why do laboratories get it wrong?](#)

News story

Michael Walker will talk in detail about the process involved in the resolution of technical disputes in the UK official food control system after an introduction by Julian Braybrook



During this first webinar in June 2020, which will take place instead of the Government Chemist conference, [now postponed until June 2021](#), [Dr Michael Walker](#), Head of the Office of the Government Chemist and Referee Analyst, will discuss common issues leading to appeals for referee analysis.

The webinar will start with an introduction by [Dr Julian Braybrook](#) on the role of the Government Chemist. Dr Michael Walker will describe the technical appeal safeguard and the control system in the often complex cases where appeal has been invoked. Michael will reflect on lessons on why labs can produce discordant results in many areas including food allergens, contaminants, choking hazards, food additives, veterinary and pesticides residues and GMOs.

The webinar will take place live on 24 June at 15.00 (UK time) and there will be opportunity for questions.

Registration is free, [register here](#) to get your event link.

For more information about the work the Government Chemist does contact:

## [Fish rescued as Shropshire rivers dry up](#)

Yesterday, officers were out on the Teme at Lower Stange and on the River Redlake at Bucknell, rescuing more than 60 brown trout and one salmon. Officers were also out on the Teme last week rescuing trout and salmon. All of the fish caught have been moved downstream to deeper waters.

It is an area prone to drying up when there has been little rain. Fish have been moved downstream and once the water comes back they will steadily flow back up and repopulate again. With May being the driest since records began, it is no surprise that Environment Agency specialists had to move fish downstream.

This section of the River Redlake at Bucknell has completely dried out

Dave Carrington, fisheries officer with the Environment Agency said:

In recent years we've had to regularly rescue fish on these rivers as they've been left stranded when the river dries up after a dry spell. We will continue to monitor these rivers as sections of them are likely to continue to dry up and will carry out further fish rescues if needed.

Fisheries technical specialist with the Environment Agency, Chris Bainger, also commented on the low numbers of juvenile salmon found during these rescues:

This may be an indication of the effects of recent flooding. The lack of juveniles is a real concern, as salmon stocks are already at a critically low level in the Severn catchment. If the juveniles are not present this indicates either a failure of adult spawning or the obliteration of the redds (nests) last winter, that will impact on the numbers of returning adults in 4 and 5 years' time.

With the long dry spell continuing, figures show that in the Severn Basin, in February, rainfall was nearly 3 times the average, while in May it was only 11 per cent of the average for the month. With demand for clean water currently outstripping supply, consumers are being asked to use water wisely,

for example, by not using sprinklers or hoses to water gardens, and to take showers rather than baths.

The work was all carried out adhering to current guidelines on social distancing.

Warm weather can often lead to algal blooms or water that is too warm which make it difficult for fish to breathe. They are often seen gasping for air; if anyone sees fish in distress, please contact the Environment Agency 24/7 on 0800 80 70 60.

## **Notes to editors**

The role of the Environment Agency during a dry spell is to monitor and protect the environment, whilst balancing the needs of people, industry and agriculture.

During dry spells it's not unusual for some rivers and lakes in fast responding catchments to deplete quickly, during even short periods of low rainfall, and they tend to recover quickly when the rain returns.

There are currently no water use restrictions in place for local water company customers. And groundwater resources are normal for the time or year.

Like most years, we're releasing water from the Shropshire Groundwater Scheme and Clywedog Reservoir into the River Severn. The River Severn forms part of a large water supply system for the West Midlands. Around 6 million people rely upon the river for their drinking water as well as providing water for local businesses.

We're closely monitoring all rivers across the area, as is usual in warm dry weather, there are already abstraction restrictions in place. Further restrictions will be issued when necessary. These are issued when the river is too low to sustain the number of abstractions and protect the environment.

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## **[Trustee of Aylesbury poverty relief charity disqualified after stealing over £200,000](#)**

Buckinghamshire based charity, GTC ([charity 1160421](#)), has been removed from the register of charities, and its sole trustee has been disqualified from charity trusteeship. The Charity Commission [reports today](#) on its statutory inquiry into GTC, which found that around £240,000 was stolen by the trustee.

The regulator [launched its probe](#) into GTC in December 2018 over concerns

about the charity's governance and financial management. The charity's purpose was to relieve poverty in the UK, mainly in the area around Aylesbury.

Investigators used legal powers to obtain bank records and established that around £240,000 (the majority of which had been mistakenly paid to the charity by a third party) was transferred from the charity's bank account to the trustee's private bank account. The funds had then been used to purchase a property which was held in the name of a private company of which the same individual was the sole director and the sole shareholder. The funds have now been repaid to the third party.

The inquiry also found poor governance at the charity which was operating in breach of its governing document. It had just one trustee in the years leading up to the inquiry meaning there were no other trustees to oversee and assist in decision-making processes or to appropriately manage conflicts of interest.

The Commission was also concerned by delays, gaps and a lack of clarity in the charity's annual accounts submitted to the regulator, some of which were not compliant with the charity accounting framework. The individual also failed to comply with a direction under the Charities Act which required him to attend a meeting and provide information to the Commission.

The inquiry concluded that these failings amounted to misconduct and/or mismanagement in the administration of the charity.

The regulator used its powers to share information with other agencies, and on 31 October 2019, the trustee, Mr Ahtiq Raja, was found guilty of theft at Northampton Crown Court and was later sentenced to a 24-month community order. As a result of his conviction, he is now automatically disqualified from acting as a trustee or from holding a senior management role in any charity in England and Wales.

The charity no longer operates and was removed from the register of charities on 9 April 2020.

### **Amy Spiller, Head of Investigation Teams at the Charity Commission said:**

Charity represents the best of human characteristics – that's why the behaviour of charities matter. This charity was set up to improve the lives of people suffering financial hardship, but sadly this individual betrayed those good intentions.

Our investigation uncovered appalling behaviour by someone who was in a position of trust, and it is right that they have been held to account for their actions. This case also exposed what can go wrong when there is a lack of oversight and poor governance within a charity.

The full report is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

**Ends.**

**Note to editors:**

The Charity Commission's purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society. It is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales.

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## [Highways England starts search to find archaeological specialists for A303 upgrade near Stonehenge](#)

Following the selection of three bidders for the main works procurement, today marks the start of a four-month process to select a world class team of archaeological experts to undertake work, should planning consent be granted.

Highways England Project Director Derek Parody said:

The World Heritage Site around Stonehenge is a heritage site of national and international importance. We want to ensure that archaeological remains are preserved and recorded, in advance of scheme construction, by commissioning appropriate archaeological expertise.

Throughout this project we have been working closely with the country's heritage bodies and a Scientific Committee of eminent archaeological experts to ensure the scheme will conserve and enhance the World Heritage Site, and this will continue throughout the archaeological investigations and the construction process.

The procurement process in no way pre-empts the granting of a Development Consent Order and while we await the Secretary of State's decision, we need to progress the procurement to ensure the project is in the best position it can be in to proceed at pace thereafter.

Highways England's proposed £1.7 billion upgrade of the A303 between Amesbury and Berwick Down includes:

- 8 miles of free-flowing, high-quality dual carriageway
- a twin-bore tunnel 2 miles long underneath the World Heritage Site,

closely following the existing A303 route, avoiding important archaeological sites, and avoiding intrusion on the view of the setting sun from the stones during the winter solstice

- a new bypass to the north of the village of Winterbourne Stoke, with a viaduct over the River Till valley
- new junctions with the A345 and A360 either side of the World Heritage Site

The scheme will unlock congestion along this vital A303 route, conserve and enhance the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site and benefit the local and regional economy by providing skills and job opportunities for businesses large and small.

The process launched today relates to a £35 million contract. It will involve documentation, site works, processing, laboratory work, reporting and dissemination, as well as archaeological evaluation and recording.

In the meantime, Highways England, the company responsible for the country's major A roads and motorways, is progressing the procurement process for the main works contract and is participating in dialogue with the three bidders over a six-month period before they submit their final tenders. The preferred bidder is expected to be announced in 2021.

Following a six-month Development Consent Order Examination last year, the Planning Inspectorate sent its report and recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport and this will be published once a decision has been made.

The Transport Secretary recently announced a new deadline of 17 July for DCO decisions on Highways England's A303 Stonehenge, A303 Sparkford to Ilchester and A63 Castle Street projects.

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.