

Dalgety Bay clean-up to begin as contract awarded



Ministry of Defence Main Building. MOD Crown Copyright.

The beach at Dalgety Bay is contaminated with radium, which needs to be removed. It has been agreed with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and Fife Council that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is best placed to remove the contamination. This is being done on a voluntary basis.

The £10.5-million contract has been awarded to Balfour Beatty, with the first phase of work scheduled until 30 September. Work cannot take place during the winter months as Dalgety Bay is then home to wading birds which over-winter there. The project will then recommence in April for a further 6 months. This 6 month work schedule will continue until the work is complete. The project will clear the beach of contaminant material and put a barrier in place to prevent any other material coming to the surface. The jetty and slipway will also be replaced.

Steve Ritchie, DIO's Project Manager, said:

Throughout this process, DIO has worked closely with relevant public bodies, including SEPA and Fife Council, as well as local landowners. We're pleased to be able to make a start on this important work and look forward to its planned completion.

Calum MacDonald, SEPA Executive Director, said:

Every day SEPA works to protect and enhance Scotland's environment. We welcome the Defence Infrastructure Organisation's announcement that the contract that will allow remediation at Dalgety Bay to begin has been awarded.

This is an important milestone and SEPA will continue to work with

all parties to ensure that the remediation work is successful. This will result in a positive resolution for the Dalgety Bay community.

Published 25 February 2020

[Lord Ahmad addresses 43rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council](#)

Madame President, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Before I begin, I want to offer my deepest sympathies, on behalf of the United Kingdom, to all those affected by Covid-19 in China and elsewhere. The international community must work together to better understand the threat we face, and to take the most effective action. The UK will play our part.

Madame President, 75 years ago, in the aftermath of a most appalling conflict, the architects of the UN charter carved out three pillars of cooperation with which we could all build a better, safer, and more equal future.

Today, the United Kingdom remains steadfastly committed to working with all of you to maintain peace and security, foster development, and promote and protect human rights, just as the authors of the Charter envisaged.

Madame President, they knew that states that respect human rights create the conditions for societies that are more secure, more prosperous, and better equipped to meet the needs of their people. That is why, to this day, respect for human rights remains at the heart of the international system.

And it is why, in 2020, and beyond, the UK will place the promotion and protection of human rights at the top of our list of international priorities.

As a global force for good, we will continue to uphold and defend the international rule of law, the values of liberal democracy, and the rights and freedoms of citizens around the world.

As a demonstration of that commitment to international human rights, the UK will seek re-election to the Council later this year.

As our then Foreign Secretary, now Prime Minister, said to this Council in June 2018, we could solve many of the world's most serious problems, and achieve virtually every sustainable development goal by 2030, if every girl in the world had at least 12 years of quality education. We will strain every sinew to achieve that goal, while also striving to end sexual violence in

conflict, and violence against women and girls.

We also pledge to stand up for freedom of expression, thought, conscience, and religion or belief; to defend media freedom, stand up for journalists and other media workers, and support other civil society groups that hold the powerful to account.

In that regard, I commend to this Council the statement published today by the Media Freedom Coalition, co-chaired by the United Kingdom and Canada. The statement outlines the collective intent of Coalition members to take action on individual cases and situations of concern, to speak out publicly and to provide support for those advocating for media freedom.

The United Kingdom will also implement a new autonomous human rights sanctions regime to punish those who violate and abuse human rights.

Finally, as co-host of this year's crucial UN Climate Summit, we will strive to raise global ambitions and commitments on tackling climate change, and its potential impacts on the enjoyment of human rights.

Madame President, despite the commitment and efforts of many in this chamber, we know that millions of people around the world continue to be deprived of their rights and freedoms. In Syria, human rights continue to be violated and abused every day, with the regime the main perpetrator. We are gravely concerned about the reckless offensive by Syrian and Russian forces in Idlib, in which hospitals, schools and first responders have all come under attack. Those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law must be held to account.

In Myanmar and Bangladesh, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims and other ethnic minorities, many of whom have survived violence, including sexual violence, remain stranded far from home.

The authorities in Myanmar must implement the provisional measures required by the International Court of Justice, together with the recommendations made by the Rakhine Advisory Commission, and the Independent Commission of Enquiry.

In Iran in November, we saw the most deadly crackdown against internal political dissent since 1979, and a near-total shutdown of the internet. Faith groups have also been targeted. We urge the Iranian authorities to release those detained, and to respect freedom of expression, religion or belief.

In North Korea, reports of serious and wide-ranging human rights violations continue to emerge. We again call on the North Korean government to work with the Council to address them.

Finally, in China, over a million Uyghurs have been extra judicially detained, and there are systematic restrictions on Uyghur culture and the practice of Islam. We call on China to allow the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights unfettered access to the region.

Madame President. There are times when the human rights picture across the world looks bleak; when the violations and abuses we see are too heart breaking; when the challenges for this Council seem too great.

At such times, when we doubt our ability to achieve our goals, we must remember all that we have achieved together over the last 75 years, from the bleakest of beginnings. Together, we have built a human rights framework based on the principle that 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights'; a system that can hold the perpetrators of the worst human rights violations and abuses to account; and, importantly, a system that can support governments across the world to improve their human rights record.

So, in the face of every new challenge, we should not lose heart. We should recognise the great value of this Council and the wider human rights system, and encourage all states to engage openly with it.

Above all, we should remember the individuals around the world whose rights and freedoms are violated and abused – the world's most vulnerable people, who rely on this Council to expose their suffering.

By working together, in this Chamber and beyond, we will ensure that they and others can enjoy their human rights, can live in safety and freedom, and can contribute to the wellbeing and prosperity of their country and the wider world.

That is surely a goal that we should all continue to fight for. The United Kingdom is committed to doing just that – today, tomorrow and into the future.

Thank you.

New CMA campaign urges firms to compete, not cheat

The launch comes after a sustained crackdown against illegal cartels by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), which issued over £43 million in fines last year alone.

Anti-competitive practices like price fixing, bid rigging and dividing markets or customers between competitors – commonly referred to as market sharing – can take place in any business. However, a number of recent CMA cases have come from the construction industry.

New research, conducted on behalf of the CMA, revealed that only 6% of firms in this sector were familiar with competition law and that general

understanding of the illegality of these business practices is low.

29% of those surveyed thought it was OK to attend meetings with competitors to agree prices. A further 32% thought agreeing not to supply each other's customers was legal, and a quarter (25%) saw no problem with discussing bids and agreeing who would get which tenders.

The research shows that only 6% of management teams of the construction firms surveyed had received competition law training. Additionally, only 6% of the respondents had actively sought out information on how to comply with the law.

Howard Cartlidge, the CMA's Senior Director of Cartels, said:

"The CMA is cracking down on businesses that collude to rip off customers by fixing prices, sharing out markets amongst themselves or rigging bids. Our message to them is that we know cheating when we see it, even if you don't. Pleading ignorance is no defence; it's up to businesses to know what these unfair practices look like and avoid them.

"By ensuring you stay on the right side of the law, you can avoid substantial fines, director disqualification or jail. And if you suspect something illegal is going on, report it to us before it's too late."

The CMA understands that most businesses want to do the right thing and the campaign is designed to help them do that and to ensure fair dealing. Putting an end to an illegal cartel means that businesses and customers don't lose out because others choose to cheat – cheating that comes with serious consequences.

Lifting the lid

Today, the CMA has also lifted the lid and highlighted the secret conversations that take place inside illegal cartels.

An investigation into a [pre-cast concrete drainage cartel](#) that resulted in £36m in fines in 2019, revealed that the businesses concerned held regular secret meetings (four of which were secretly recorded by the CMA), away from business premises, in hotel meeting rooms.

The businesses discussed and agreed certain price lists, which were then used by sales teams as a basis for negotiating with customers. They also agreed that they would not compete for each other's customers on certain fixed price contracts. One of the individuals at a cartel meeting said:

"...I'm quite happy if we agree jobs, because you know, it is pointless cutting the bloody price, we should be sticking out, as we've always said, get a better price..."

And another said:

"...just set the term deals up, set the ... market rates up and the merchants

rates up ... and the likelihood is you're going to get the same market share..."

Meanwhile, [the CMA fined 3 Berkshire estate agents](#) in 2019 for illegally fixing the minimum levels of commission fees that they would charge customers on the sale of residential properties. Four estate agents implemented the illegal arrangement primarily through secret meetings, as shown in the evidence gathered, for example:

"The company average fee is now around 1.8%. I am willing to do whatever it takes to get this sorted. We've had meetings over the last few weeks with other agents [...] and there is at last a general consensus that something should be done. Let me know if you would like to meet with several of our competitors."

Campaign reach

The CMA's campaign will target firms via posts on social media sites, and radio and digital display advertising. The campaign encourages people to visit the CMA's designated ['Cheating or Competing?' page](#) which features videos, short guides and case studies to explain what business cartels are and how people can report them.

Additionally, as the CMA continues to step up its drive to raise awareness of cartels, the campaign has received support from the Federation of Small Businesses and Institute of Directors.

Charlotte Valeur, Chair of the Institute of Directors, said:

"Competitive markets are good for both consumers and businesses, encouraging innovation and keeping prices down, so it's worrying that the CMA have found that many businesses leaders don't know their full legal responsibilities. Firms should prioritise director training and professional development to ensure they do not inadvertently fall foul of the law."

Federation of Small Businesses National Chair Mike Cherry said:

"This awareness campaign from the CMA is so important.

"Greater awareness is needed for all businesses about these practises, some of which could be ruinous for small businesses. SMEs want to do the right thing, which is why it is so important to have a clear understanding of the law surrounding, anti-competitive behaviours such as cartels and price fixing.

"FSB's own research has found that such practices could have a serious impact on competition as well as issues involving diversity and creating a more complex business environment."

Notes to editors

1. The CMA commissioned IFF Research to carry out a survey of UK senior

representatives from construction firms and other businesses that work in the sector. In January 2020, 400 people were questioned about their understanding of competition law. The results of this survey were used in this press release.

2. One of the companies involved in the October 2019 decision regarding the precast concrete drainage cartel is appealing the CMA's decision. This appeal goes to both the findings in the decision and the amount of the penalty. The CMA is defending the appeal. The other companies involved admitted breaking the law and accepted the penalties that were imposed on them.
3. Businesses found to have been involved in illegal cartels can be fined up to 10% of their annual turnover. Individuals can face up to 5 years in prison and directors can be disqualified from holding director positions for up to 15 years.
4. These can be reduced or eliminated altogether where a business or individual report their involvement in a cartel and co-operate via the CMA's 'leniency' programme. Separately, witnesses who blow the whistle on the illegal conduct of others can receive a reward of up to £100,000. People can call: 0203 738 6888 (witnessed); 0203 738 6833 (leniency).
5. Enquiries should be directed to the CMA press team at press@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6460

“Every complaint about charities matters” – Charity Commission urges charities to “listen and learn” when they receive complaints

The Charity Commission is urging charities to “listen and learn” when issues are brought to them.

The regulator has [reviewed complaints and reports about charities](#) that fall below the threshold for regulatory action, to help it, and charities, learn from the matters raised by the public. The review is part of the Commission's commitment, set out in its 2018-2023 strategy, to ensure no complaint is ignored. All complaints about charities contribute to the Commission's assessment of risks facing charities, even where no direct regulatory action

is required.

The Commission says the review revealed that most complaints come from people invested in a charity – including beneficiaries, supporters, volunteers and trustees – and relate to issues that affect them personally. The Commission says that “it isn’t the case that people only complain about a few large household name charities”.

People who complain to the regulator often do so because they “felt their concerns had been ignored or dismissed” by the charity. Where a charity doesn’t respond appropriately to concerns or does not demonstrate genuine accountability in its public reports and accounts it risks generating “suspicion and frustration”, the regulator says.

The report points to the importance of recognising the heightened expectations people have of the behaviour and attitudes demonstrated by those involved in charity and responding accordingly to questions and concerns. It cites, in particular, poorly managed or handled conflicts of interest as a source of concern and suspicion. The regulator also highlights the trust charities inspire when they respond well to complaints.

Helen Stephenson, CEO of the Charity Commission, said:

Charity can and should lead the way in taking public expectations seriously. If you’re a charity, that includes showing that you take complaints and concerns seriously, and are responding appropriately. This review demonstrates that these high expectations are shared by those close to you: your own beneficiaries, volunteers, staff, supporters and trustees – and that, if they complain, by responding well in the first place, you can help avoid matters being brought to the regulator’s attention. I hope this review helps empower charities to take preventative steps that avoid complaints, and to respond with care when problems do arise.

Today’s report is the first thematic review of complaints the Commission has conducted under its new strategy; the regulator says it will undertake future reviews that may explore other themes and issues.

Ends

Notes to editors:

1. The Charity Commission received 600 complaints and reports about charities between April and June 2019 that did not meet the threshold for regulatory intervention; of these, it carried out in-depth reviews of around 200. The report findings are based on that review.
2. The Charity Commission is the regulator of charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.

Youngsters execute successfully environmental projects in Guatemala

The Summit was an event organized by the British Embassy in Guatemala and Semillas del Océano on September last year, which aimed at empowering a new generation of young Guatemalan leaders to promote actions that would reduce solid waste pollution.

After participating at the Summit and submitting their project ideas, the four youth groups who received the “Mini-Grants: 4Rs” (Reduce, Recycle, Reuse and Reject), presented their results in favor of the environment in Cobán, Zacapa, Villa Nueva and San Lucas Tolimán.

The fund was given by the British Embassy in Guatemala, Semillas del Océano and MAR Fund, for a total of twelve thousand Quetzales (Q 12,000) which was split among the four groups of young people. In addition to the fund, the winners had follow-up sessions and field visits by Semillas del Océano, to reinforce them through training for the correct implementation of their projects and its impact assessment.

The first-place winner group executed the “Makamul” project in Cobán, Alta Verapaz to reduce the environmental impact of discarded notebooks at the end of the school year. The young people managed to create environmentally friendly notebooks, made from rescued and reused paper from educational centres in Cobán. The amount of paper collected by the project was more than 100 quintals.

The second group presented the results of the “La Casa de los Bichos” project in Zacapa, through which they built 15 structures specially designed to provide shelter for insect pollinators that are important for the dry forest survival of that region. For the manufacturing of the “hotels for bugs”, the young people used plastics, waste and rescued materials in clean-up events that were organized with the community of Pueblo Modelo, Zacapa.

The young people who carried out the “Restauración de áreas verdes” Project in Villa Nueva, managed to organize the neighbours through the “Your green space” campaign to restore the green areas in the communities INDE and GUATEL II, through environmental improvement and proper management of solid waste. They also managed to place two collecting stations for recyclable materials with segmented sorting cans. Since its inauguration, recycling points have collected 85.76 pounds of waste.

The group that executed the “Buenas Practicas GT” project in San Lucas Tolimán, organized an aquatic and terrestrial clean-up in Lake Atitlan to reduce the volume of solid and organic waste found in the area that is damaging the ecosystem. They manage to extract 439 pounds of garbage. They also did a reforestation in the sector with the support of 38 people who

voluntarily came to help.

Nick Whittingham, British Ambassador to Guatemala, said:

We created the concept of the Summit for the 4Rs as a space where young people from Guatemala could learn about the environmental problem that is causing waste pollution and how they can take actions to tackle this issue from the root.

Alerick Pacay, Executive Director of Semillas del Oceano, said:

We want this Summit to become an event that can be held year after year, and that more young people can be trained in a topic with such relevance worldwide. Guatemala has talent, but for this to happen we need the sponsorship of institutions and companies.