

# [Press release: Provisional decision to remove Rough gas storage undertakings](#)

In June this year the facility's operator, Centrica Storage Limited (CSL), [announced](#) that it intended to close the plant due to its age, physical deterioration and the associated safety risks, plus the high cost of refurbishing the facility to make it workable.

The facility's owners, Centrica plc (Centrica) and CSL, requested that the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) remove historic undertakings – designed to ensure competition in the sector – as part of the closure process.

These included the legal, financial and physical separation of CSL from Centrica, restrictions on Centrica's access to capacity and ensuring non-discriminatory access to capacity for Rough's customers.

Following a review, the CMA has provisionally decided to release CSL and Centrica from these undertakings. The companies will also need agreement from the Oil and Gas Authority to cease their storage operations.

Martin Cave, CMA chair, said:

CMA panel members made this provisional decision based on the age and degradation of the gas wells and other facilities at Rough, which mean that the assets are no longer capable of safe operation for gas storage without substantial refurbishment.

We also considered present and anticipated market conditions which meant that the level of investment required to meet the legal obligation to operate safely was not economically viable. This has led to our provisional finding that the undertakings are no longer required.

Further details, including the CMA's provisional decision to remove the undertakings, can be found on the [case page](#).

## **Notes for editors**

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For CMA updates, follow us on Twitter [@CMAgovuk](#), [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#) and [LinkedIn](#).
2. The Rough undertakings were first given by Centrica Storage Ltd and

Centrica plc following Centrica plc's acquisition in 2002 of the Rough gas storage facility and have been subsequently amended following Competition Commission reviews in 2006 and 2011, and a further review by the CMA in 2016.

3. The Rough undertakings were accepted by the Secretary of State under section 88 of the Fair Trading Act 1973. By virtue of paragraph 16 of Schedule 24 to the Enterprise Act 2002, and The Enterprise Act 2002 (Enforcement Undertakings and Orders) Order 2004 (SI 2004/2181), the CMA has the ability to supersede, vary or release certain undertakings accepted under the Fair Trading Act 1973; this includes the Rough undertakings. This power is exercisable in the same circumstances, and on the same terms and conditions as applied to the Secretary of State under the Fair Trading Act 1973; namely that by reason of any change of circumstances the undertakings are no longer appropriate and need to be varied, superseded or released.
4. The group of CMA panel members acting as decision-makers in the review are [Martin Cave](#) (Chair), [Anne Fletcher](#), [Jayne Scott](#) and [Jon Stern](#).
5. Media enquiries to the CMA should be directed to [press@cma.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:press@cma.gsi.gov.uk) or 020 3738 6798.

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## [News story: Government doubles exceptional talent visa offer](#)

As part of its ongoing commitment to welcome talented people from across the globe, and in recognition of the importance of these innovative industries to the UK, the number of visas available through the Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) route is increasing from 1,000 to 2,000 a year.

This will ensure that more highly skilled people who enhance the UK's economy can come to, and work in, this country. It is a further demonstration of the government's dedication to the global mobility of individuals who will help make sure that the UK remains at the forefront of these world-leading industries.

The Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

I am delighted that we are able to welcome more talented people from across the world to our country. Increasing the number of visas for these sectors will make sure that we continue to be at

the heart of world culture and forefront of digital and scientific advances.

The UK's innovative industries, including the thriving digital technology sector, are at the centre of our industrial strategy and making sure that businesses in these fields have access to exceptional talent from across the world is vitally important.

That is why I will be meeting with technology experts to seek their input on making sure that our visa processes are as efficient as possible.

The 2,000 visas will be made available to individuals who are recognised as existing global leaders or promising future leaders in the digital technology, science, arts and creative sectors by 1 of 5 UK endorsing organisations:

- Tech City UK
- Arts Council England
- The British Academy
- The Royal Society
- The Royal Academy of Engineering

Matt Clifford MBE, Co-founder and CEO of Entrepreneur First said:

We commend the Home Office's decision to increase the number of Tier 1 Exceptional Talent visas.

We cannot ignore the fact that our digital and tech economy cannot survive on home-grown talent alone and is substantially boosted by exceptional foreign individuals who have chosen to build their businesses in the UK.

If London is to continue being the European hub for tech, and if it is to grow to rival other internationally significant tech centres, we must ensure the UK becomes an increasingly welcoming hub for EU and non-EU nationals alike.

The current allocations of the 1,000 visas – which are split between the 5 endorsing organisations – will remain and the additional places will be made available across all of the endorsing bodies dependent on need. The government is keen to ensure that all nations and regions of the UK benefit from this change. The Home Office will look at how it can work with organisations across the UK to ensure wider take up of these visas outside London.

This announcement is part of the government's ongoing reforms to routes to the UK from outside the EU. Ahead of the UK leaving the EU, the Home Office has also commissioned the independent Migration Advisory Committee to advise on the impact of the UK's exit from the EU on the labour market. The results

of the commission, which was published in July, will help shape the government's decisions on the future immigration system.

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## Press release: Unemployment remains at 40-year low

Official figures show that unemployment has remained at 4.3%, the lowest rate since 1975.

The figures, released by the Office for National Statistics, also show that employment remains at a near record high, with 32 million people in work.

Increases in full-time and permanent work are behind the figures. In the last year the number of people on zero hours contracts has fallen by 20,000.

Minister for Employment, Damian Hinds said:

The strength of the economy is driving an increase in full-time, permanent jobs and a near-record number of people are now in work thanks to the government's welfare reforms.

When unemployment fell to 5% early last year, many people thought it couldn't get much lower, and yet it now stands at 4.3%.

Everyone should be given the opportunity to find work and enjoy the stability of a regular pay packet. We've cut income tax for 30 million people since 2010, meaning people keep more of their money each month.

Today's employment figures also show

- the number of people in employment has increased by more than 3 million since 2010
- the UK has the third highest employment rate in the G7
- the number of workers aged 50+ has almost reached 10 million – a record level
- youth unemployment has fallen by over 40% since 2010
- there are a near record 780,000 vacancies in the economy at any one time
- the proportion of young people who are unemployed and not in full time education remains below 5%

Separate figures out today show there are [630,000 people on Universal Credit, with 40% in employment](#).

Follow DWP on:

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## Statement to Parliament: Implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention and Protocols

I am today announcing and publishing measures to support the effective implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols of 1954 and 1999 and the Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Act 2017.

The United Kingdom ratified the Convention and acceded to the Protocols on 12th September. They will enter into force for the United Kingdom on 12th December.

Commencement regulations have been made to bring the Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Act 2017 into force on that date.

I am publishing a document setting out implementation measures in three key areas: cultural property protected by the Convention and Protocols; safeguarding protected cultural property; and use of the cultural emblem.

Part one of the document identifies seven categories of cultural property in the United Kingdom which we consider meet the definition of cultural property set out in the Convention and are therefore protected by the Convention and Protocols. These categories are indicative and non-exhaustive: there may be other cultural property which meets the definition and which is therefore also protected. The list of categories is UK-wide and has been agreed with the devolved administrations.

Part two sets out our approach to safeguarding cultural property. It explains that we do not intend to impose any additional or specific safeguarding requirements on the owners, guardians and trustees of cultural property in England to be implemented during peacetime, given that they should already have plans in place to deal with emergencies and disasters and armed conflict affecting the territory of the United Kingdom is not expected in the foreseeable future.

Part three deals with use of the cultural emblem. It explains when permission to use the cultural emblem is required and how to request permission. It also explains that the government does not intend to grant permission for the cultural emblem to be displayed on immovable cultural property, such as museums and historic buildings, during peacetime, except where a strong, persuasive case can be made for doing so, in order to protect the integrity of the cultural emblem as a symbol of protection during armed conflict.

Initial permissions to use the emblem for education and training purposes and by the Ministry of Defence, for the new Armed Forces' Cultural Property Protection Unit, the British Red Cross, and the Blue Shield International and National Committees of the Blue Shield are included in an annex. These permissions will come into force on 12th December.

Parts two and three and the permissions in the annex relate only to England. The devolved administrations are responsible for safeguarding cultural property and for granting permissions to use and display the cultural emblem in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

I am also publishing a separate guidance document on the new offence of dealing in unlawfully exported cultural property which is created by section 17 of the Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Act 2017.

Both documents are available [here](#).

I have arranged for copies of both documents to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

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## **Press release: Highways England is geared up for winter**

The company responsible for the country's motorways and main A roads has more than 280,000 tonnes of salt, over 500 salt spreading vehicles ready around the clock to help drivers get to their destinations safely.

Roads Minister, Jesse Norman said:

It is essential to keep our road network running throughout the winter.

Highways England has informed us that they are well prepared for adverse weather, with enough salt to cover 610,000 miles of our motorways.

But the expert advice is clear: drivers need to make their own judgements about road conditions. If it doesn't look safe then they should stay put and travel once weather conditions have improved.

Highways England's national winter and severe weather team leader, Paul Furlong, said:

We care about people getting to their destinations safely and

during any severe weather our teams will be working around the clock to keep traffic moving.

We're asking drivers to make sure they and their vehicles are also prepared. Before you set out, check your vehicle, the road conditions and the weather forecast. If conditions are poor, and journeys are not essential, consider waiting until the weather gets better – this should improve journeys, and give our gritters a chance to treat the roads.'

To help keep traffic moving, Highways England has nearly 130 winter service depots across the country, and more than 250 environmental sensor stations that provide real-time monitoring of road weather conditions and temperatures.

Highways England is urging drivers not to use the hard shoulder to undertake gritters, risking a collision with a stationary vehicle and causing a hazard when gritters try to come off at junctions.

Drivers are asked not to take unnecessary risks this winter and only pass a gritter when it is safe to do so, avoiding using the hard shoulder and checking for hazards ahead.

During severe weather drivers are urged to follow this advice:

- In snow and ice, drivers should stick to the main roads where they can and only travel if necessary
- drivers are also encouraged to make sure they have a winter kit in their vehicle, including an ice scraper and de-icer, warm clothes and blankets and sunglasses to cope with the low winter sun
- In high winds, there's a particular risk to lorries, caravans and motorbikes, so drivers should slow down and avoid using exposed sections of road if possible
- In heavy rain, drivers should keep well back from the vehicle in front, gradually ease off the accelerator if the steering becomes unresponsive, and slow down if the rain and spray from vehicles makes it difficult to see and be seen
- In fog, drivers should switch on their fog lights and not use lights on full beam as the fog will reflect the light back – if you really cannot see, you should consider stopping until it is safe to continue

Drivers are advised to follow messages on the overhead signs and listen to radio updates. Further information can be found by [visiting our traffic information website](#) or calling the Highways England Information Line on 0300 123 5000.

## **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.