

[News story: Rules around removal of lost fishing gear clarified](#)

The MMO is reviewing the marine licensing process to ensure that it is as efficient as possible, offers value for money and proportionately manages risks to the marine environment.

As part of this it has become aware that marine licensing guidance for recreational divers, in particular around removal of marine litter and fishing equipment, could be made clearer. The guidance provides interpretation on the relevant sections of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009.

The MMO has committed to working with relevant organisations and representative groups to review and improve the guidance.

In the meantime the MMO has confirmed that a lifting bag can be used to remove an object (including marine litter) up to 100kg provided the object has been there for less than 12 months. Beyond that a marine licence is required. It has also clarified that marine litter does not include abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear (ALDFG).

Projects to remove ALDFG should be submitted to the MMO as a marine licensing application, which will allow appropriate consideration of the risks to the historic environment and nature conservation features.

In July 2017 the MMO [introduced a self-service approach](#) for marine licensing which may be relevant in these circumstances. This is making it quicker and easier for applicants in low-risk circumstances, while also enabling the MMO to reduce the licensing fee by more than half to £50. This process has already [been used in relation to fishing gear removal activities](#).

[News story: Civil news: HPCDS market engagement](#)

On 16 August LAA announced that the procurement process for new civil legal aid contracts from 2018 will begin from mid-September 2017.

To inform the procurement approach for new Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme (HPCDS) contracts, organisations that may be interested in tendering for these are invited to attend market engagement events.

How do I attend?

Organisations interested in attending must register online. Links for online registration are detailed in the table below.

Places at market engagement events are limited to a maximum of 2 representatives per organisation.

Where events are overbooked, we may subsequently require that only 1 representative attends to ensure that the maximum number of organisations have the opportunity to participate. Representatives from prospective bidding organisations will be prioritised over third party consultants.

Organisations are encouraged to register for a single session, where possible, and to attend the event(s) in the geographic region(s) relevant to where they are interested in delivering services under a HPCDS contract.

When will events be held and how do I register?

There will be 14 market engagement events in total. The time allowed for each event is up to 2 hours but they may last less than this depending on the level of questions:

[Birmingham – 29 August – am and pm](#)

[Manchester – 30 August – am and pm](#)

[Leeds – 4 September – am and pm](#)

[London – 5 and 7 September – am and pm](#)

[Liverpool – 6 September – am and pm](#)

[Bristol – 8 September – am and pm](#)

What will happen at the market engagement events

At each event LAA will provide information on the proposed tender approach for HPCDS contracts and will welcome feedback on this from attendees.

At some events we intend to discuss specific HPCDS Scheme Areas arising from HPCDS consultation feedback as follows:

- Birmingham – HPCDS in the Midlands, including an in depth focus on the proposed Birmingham, Herefordshire and Worcestershire HPCDS area
- Manchester – HPCDS in the North West, including in depth focus on the proposed City of Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire and Shropshire HPCDS area
- London – HPCDS in London and the South East
- Leeds – HPCDS in the North East
- Liverpool – HPCDS in the North West, including in depth focus on the proposed Liverpool, Wirral and Cheshire HPCDS Scheme Area and North West Wales, North East Wales and Central Wales HPCDS Scheme Area
- Bristol – HPCDS in the South West and Wales, including in depth focus on

the proposed North West Wales, North East Wales and Central Wales HPCDS area

What if I can't attend on the session in my area?

For those unable to attend an event in person, LAA will also be holding a [WebEx at 10am on 11 September 2017](#).

Is attendance mandatory if I want to submit a tender for an HPCDS Contract?

No. Attendance at a market engagement event is not required in order to submit a HPCDS Tender. However, it provides an opportunity for organisations thinking of bidding for an HPCDS contract to feed into the procurement approach.

[News story: More Application Enquiry updates for Business e-services customers](#)

We are improving the Contact Us form in Application Enquiry.

Used by thousands of Business e-services customers, Application Enquiry is a free, user-friendly way for customers to track the progress and status of any application. It is accessed via the [HM Land Registry portal](#).

The improvements to the Contact Us form build on the [updates we made on 14 August](#). We continue to prioritise updates according to customer needs and feedback, and prioritise those that help us become a digital and data-driven organisation.

During week commencing 21 August, the changes to the current contact us form will include the addition of:

*Customers will need to specify the reason they want an update, allowing us to handle their query as quickly as possible and better understand their needs.

We are also removing the option for customers to request a call-back when they are enquiring about the progress of their application. This option is rarely used and in most cases we can only give an indication of when a customer's application will be completed. This often mirrors the [average completion times](#) that are already shown as part of the service.

Business customers can find out:

[Press release: Improved flood warning service now covers more properties](#)

The Environment Agency has improved its flood warning systems across West Yorkshire.

The updated service uses new modelling data, which gives more accurate alerts, helping communities to be better prepared for flooding.

As part of this latest update, four new communities near Meanwood Beck, Leeds, covering more than 3,000 properties are now included in the flood warning service. They are:

- Meanwood Beck at Headingley and Weetwood, including properties on and close to Weetwood Mill Lane, Stone Mill Way, Mill Pond Lane, Boothroyd Drive and Sugar Well Road.
- Meanwood Beck at Busingthorpe and Sheepscar, including properties on and close to Meanwood Road, Buslingthorpe Lane, Buslingthorpe Mills, Sackville Street and Barrack Street.
- Meanwood Beck at Sheepscar, Mabgate and Quarry Hill, including properties on and close to Sheepscar Street, Regent Street and Saint Peter's Street.
- Gipton Beck and Gledhow Beck, including properties on and close to Roundhay Road, Markham Avenue and Gledhow Valley Road

Due to these changes, the Environment Agency is encouraging Leeds residents and local businesses to check if they are at risk of flooding and to sign up to receive the flood warning service so they can be aware of when flooding is possible.

Residents can find out if they are eligible to receive flood warnings, and then registering, by calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188, or by visiting www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk.

This website also includes information about how to be better prepared for flooding.

Dr Jenny Armstrong, Environment Agency flood resilience officer, said:

The becks in these communities can rise very quickly after heavy rain, so providing warnings can be difficult, but our new and improved warnings aim to alert the community in a timely manner, giving people more time to prepare, and to be aware of possible

flooding so that they do not put themselves at danger.

Press release: Worcestershire man sentenced for waste offences

Yesterday (16 August 2017), Mark Smyth, aged 40, from Pershore, Worcestershire was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment suspended for 18 months, with 200 hours unpaid work following a prosecution brought by the Environment Agency at Worcester Crown Court. He was also ordered to pay £10,000 compensation to the landowner and disqualified from acting as a company director for 7 years.

Mr Smyth, who was the sole director of Arrow Gypsum Recycling Ltd, pleaded guilty to breaching the company's environmental permit condition and was found guilty of failing to comply with an enforcement notice served by the Environment Agency,

Events leading to the prosecution

During early 2015, the Environment Agency received a report that gypsum waste was being stored outside the building on the site. The conditions of the environmental permit stipulated that waste must be stored within the building, to avoid any risk to the environment.

Further investigations established that Mr Smyth had abandoned the site, leaving 29 tonnes of gypsum plasterboard outside the building and in excess of 5,000 tonnes inside the building. Attempts were made by Environment Agency officers to speak to Mr Smyth about the permit breach and clearance of the material outside. When Mr Smyth failed to respond, a formal enforcement notice was served, requiring him to clear the waste he abandoned on the site he rented at Crucible Business Park in Norton, Worcester. Mr Smyth ignored the enforcement notice.

During the trial the defendant claimed not to have received the enforcement notice. This was not accepted by the Magistrates, who found the defendant did receive the notice, but chose to bury his head in the sand and ignore it.

Environment Agency officers have worked with an agent of the landowner to clear the site, at a cost of £450,000. At Worcester Crown Court, His Honour Judge Cole, found that the substantial clean up costs was a serious aggravating feature of the case. It was clear to the court that once the processing of the gypsum waste ceased and the building became full, Mr Smyth should have stopped accepting the waste, but he did not. He deliberately continued accepting waste, leading to the breach of the permit; waste being stored outside. Mr Smyth ignored his responsibilities as the director of the

company and left the waste on the site at considerable cost to the landowner.

In mitigation the court heard that Mr Smyth intended to operate the business in line with the permit when he took over the business in 2013, but when the processing of the waste stopped, he had contracts that had to be honoured, so he carried on accepting the waste.

HHJ Cole suspended the term of imprisonment, taking into consideration the potential impact on Mr Smyth's 12 year daughter and her mother, along with Mr Smyth's previous good character.

Speaking after the case, an Environment Agency officer in charge of the investigation said:

Waste crime is a serious offence with tough penalties as it can damage the environment, blight local communities and undermine those who operate legally. This case sends out a clear message that we will not hesitate to take action against anyone that fails to comply.

You can call the Environment Agency on 0370 850 6506 to find out how to responsibly manage any waste your business produces or visit the [manage your waste](#) GOV.UK pages.