

Press release: CMA welcomes Airbnb guest review changes

As part of its ongoing work in relation to online reviews the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) became aware that people who had arrived at a property, but chose not to stay there when they saw it, were unable to leave reviews through the automatic system. Reviews could only be left with the assistance of Airbnb's customer services department. This could include customers who had left early because they were unhappy with the property or the host.

Following enquiries by the CMA, Airbnb Ireland UC ('Airbnb') offered to change its reviews system and has given the CMA a commitment to do this by 31 August 2017.

Guests will now be able to leave feedback with important information, such as the suitability of the host or the accommodation, or the reason they chose not to stay (or to cut short their stay), regardless of whether they cancelled on the day of check-in or during their visit.

The CMA welcomes Airbnb's cooperation and the company's prompt action and commitment to making improvements to its system.

Gordon Ashworth, CMA Project Director, said:

Airbnb is a popular platform used by people searching for accommodation, and the online reviews and opinions left by other guests are an important source of information.

It's therefore imperative that customers are able to access the complete picture about a property they are considering booking.

We were concerned that, if someone cut short their stay, it was too hard for them to leave a review under Airbnb's existing reviews system and so we are pleased that Airbnb engaged constructively with us and committed to making the necessary changes.

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 more information see the CMA's [homepage](#) on GOV.UK.
2. This work comes as a result of CMA work into [online reviews and](#)

[endorsements](#), including a call for information in 2015.

3. The CMA considers that review sites should publish genuine reviews, including negative reviews, provided they are genuine, lawful and relevant. Failure to publish genuine reviews may breach consumer protection legislation, in particular the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs). Only a court can decide whether a particular practice breaks the law.
4. Airbnb has cooperated fully with the CMA's enquiries into how its review system operates in relation to this issue. The provision of undertakings by Airbnb is not an admission of a breach of the law.
5. The changes to Airbnb's system will go live no later than 31 August. For CMA updates, follow us on [Facebook](#), Twitter [@CMAgovuk](#), [Youtube](#) and [LinkedIn](#).
6. Enquiries should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or 020 3738 6633.

Press release: Applications to re-permit Brockham oilfield

The Environment Agency has received 2 applications for environmental permits at the Brockham oil and gas site in Surrey.

These applications have been submitted by the site operator to bring the site into line with the current regulations for conventional oil and gas sites. This is part of the Environment Agency's review of all oil and gas permits granted prior to October 2013.

In deciding whether or not to issue the permits, the Environment Agency will take into account all relevant considerations and legal requirements.

You can view and comment on the [applications](#).

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

An environmental permit sets out stringent conditions that a site must adhere to. We will not issue or vary an environmental permit for a site if we consider that activities taking place will cause significant pollution to the environment or harm to human health.

We are in the process of determining the applications to re-permit this site and we want to hear from the public and understand peoples' views. Everybody has the chance to see what the permit may look like and to raise any additional concerns before we make any final decision.

For all media enquiries please contact 0800 141 2743 or email Southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk.

[News story: Working with China on agriculture challenges: more time to apply](#)

The deadline for an up to £8 million funding competition to work with Chinese partners on agritech solutions has been extended.

There's more time to apply into an up to £8 million competition to develop new technologies that solve the agricultural challenges facing China.

The competition has been extended until 20 September 2017 to give interested applicants in the UK and China the time they need to find collaborators and form strong partnerships.

This is being jointly funded by Innovate UK and Biotechnology and [Biological Sciences Research Council](#) (BBSRC) in the UK, and the [Ministry of Science and Technology](#) (MoST) in China. It is part of the [Newton Fund](#), which promotes economic development and social welfare of official development assistance (ODA) partner countries.

What we're looking for

We're encouraging projects in 3 areas:

- precision agriculture, agriculture digitisation and decision management tools
- sustainable agricultural production
- agricultural products processing

Competition information

- Registrations are now open until 13 September, with final applications expected by midday on 20 September
- we expect projects to range in size up to £2 million and to last up to 3

years

- all projects must involve at least one UK business, one UK higher education or research council institute, one Chinese business and one Chinese academic institution
- work must be carried out either entirely in China, or in both China and the UK
- you could attract up to 70% of your project costs

[Press release: Knostrop footbridge starts to take shape over the River Aire](#)

The main structure of a new footbridge over the River Aire is making progress as a mobile crane lifts in the decks of the bridge section later this week.

The footbridge, part of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme, is being constructed over the moveable weirs that are already in position at Knostrop.

The four bridge sections, are due to be installed this week and will be lifted into place by a 500 tonne crane. Once these are in place there will be 4 weeks of finishing work. The new bridge structure will weigh approximately 150 tonnes and span approximately 70 metres. Designed by Knight Architects, the bridge has a sinuous form to reflect the movement of water over the new Knostrop Weir. It has been positioned to provide dramatic views of the weir in operation. The very narrow piers and curving underside of the bridge deck are designed to give the bridge a slender appearance when viewed from up or downstream.

The new footbridge is being installed to reconnect the much-used Trans Pennine Trail, following the removal of a section of island between the River Aire and Aire and Calder Navigation for flood risk reduction purposes.

Construction of the new Trans Pennine Trail along the north bank of the river will begin once the bridge has been installed. The new route of the Trans Pennine Trail will be opened on completion of the project in September.

Leader of Leeds City Council Councillor Judith Blake said:

It is very pleasing to see the new Knostrop footbridge being installed as part of the final touches of the first phase of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme.

The bridge design is very attractive and striking, and will offer

some fantastic views over the River Aire and of the new moveable weirs which I'm sure people will be keen to come and see for themselves.

Aside from the reassurance this scheme will offer to residents and businesses against the risk of flooding, it also brings important leisure and environmental benefits due to the views of the river as well as reconnecting the improved Trans Pennine Trail, offering the chance to see otters, salmon and other wildlife making the most of the improving water quality and access down river open for the first time in over 200 years.

At Knostrop, all three moveable weirs are now complete and fully operational. Similar weirs are also being constructed upstream at Crown Point as part of phase 1 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Fish passes have been constructed on the new weirs at Knostrop and Crown Point, to help fish overcome these barriers and migrate upstream and further increase populations of species such as salmon.

The most obvious indicator of whether the fish passes are successful will be the sightings of salmon upstream of the weirs. Routine fish surveys will also be carried out by the Environment Agency to see any patterns in fish populations although there have already been sightings by angling enthusiasts of salmon through the city centre for the first time in over 200 years.

Rare and protected species, including otters, are now found in the River Aire catchment. This is a good indicator of improving water quality, following a history of heavy industry which depleted many species. Otters exist in a small but increasing population, and because of great improvement in water quality have been spotted in the city centre. An otter ramp has been installed at Knostrop to help them move up over the weir and otter holts will be built to help further encourage numbers.

The Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme is led by Leeds City Council in partnership with the Environment Agency and is split into two phases.

Phase 1 began in January 2015, and costing in the region of £50million, is one of the largest river flood defence schemes in the country. The scheme is putting in place formal flood defences along the River Aire for the first time. It has already seen works completed downstream in Woodlesford, and the city centre element which features the introduction of state-of-the-art moveable weirs at Crown Point and Knostrop is due to be completed this September. When finished, phase one of the scheme will indirectly safeguard 22,000 jobs and improve resilience for 3,000 homes and 500 businesses.

[News story: ICIBI website moves to GOV.UK](#)

From 27 July 2017, content from the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) website will be moving to GOV.UK.

The move to GOV.UK means that anyone wishing to access ICIBI inspection reports digitally, or to contact the ICIBI, will do so through a secure government portal. As well as ensuring that the ICIBI's website is better protected against external threats, GOV.UK offers greater resilience than the ICIBI's previous stand-alone arrangement, plus a modern and more appealing look and feel.

Meanwhile, the role and remit of the Independent Chief Inspector, which is set out in the UK Borders Act 2007, is unchanged and the inspectorate will continue to have complete editorial and content control of all of the material published on its website.

The Independent Chief Inspector, David Bolt, hopes that users will find the new website easy to access and use, and welcomes suggestions about further improvements users would like to see.