

[News story: Business rates revaluation: the facts](#)

The next business rates revaluation takes effect from 1 April 2017

The government is regularly required to update the 'rateable values' of business properties in England to make sure that they are paying the right amount of rates.

Alongside this we're introducing the biggest ever cut in business rates – a £6.7 billion package over the next 5 years.

This is about making business rates fairer

The revaluation will make the system more accurate by ensuring business rates bills reflect the property market.

Nearly three-quarters of businesses will see no change or a fall in their bills from 1 April 2017 thanks to the business rates revaluation, with 600,000 businesses set to pay no business rates at all.

The government will not benefit financially from the revaluation – it is a revenue neutral process.

In addition, from April 2020 business rates will switch from being linked to the Retail Price Index (RPI) to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), saving businesses around £370 million in total from 2020-21.

The government is providing £3.6 billion directly to businesses to help with the revaluation

The transitional relief scheme will support ratepayers by capping and phasing in any rise in bills.

600,000 small business will pay no business rates at all

As part of the £6.7 billion package of business rates cuts over the next 5 years, the government has permanently doubled Small Business Rate Relief.

Eligible properties with a rateable value of £12,000 and below will receive 100% relief.

Eligible properties with a rateable value between £12,000 and £15,000 will also benefit from business rates relief, offering significant reductions on their business rates bills.

[News story: Advocate General appears in UKSC on behalf of the Home Secretary](#)

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Advocate General appears in UK Supreme Court on behalf of the Home Secretary

On 15th and 16th of February 2017, the Advocate General for Scotland, Lord Keen of Elie QC represented the interests of the Secretary of State for the Home Department in the UK Supreme Court cases of R (on the application of Byndloss) (Appellant) v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Respondent) and R (on the application of Kiarie) (Appellant) v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Respondent). Both cases dealt with the issue of whether s.94B of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 complies with the procedural and substantive protections under art.8 ECHR. You can find a link to the UK Supreme Court website for further details, and to watch a recording of the hearings by clicking [here](#)

[Press release: How to fish responsibly during Somerset's elver season](#)

With the 2017 elver season under way, the Environment Agency is reminding Somerset's elver fishermen to stay the right side of the law.

Eels are an endangered species and recognised by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) as in need of protection. Fishing for elvers is allowed in England and Wales, but under strict conditions to ensure stocks are not over-exploited.

The elver season runs from 15 February – 25 May inclusive and is largely limited to the Rivers Parrett and Tone. There are approximately 200 licenced elver fishermen in Somerset who must register with the Environment Agency at the start of the season.

Sustainable fishing includes the capture of elvers for re-stocking in countries across Northern Europe where eel stocks have declined and cannot be replenished naturally.

All elver fishing in Somerset is done with hand held nets known as 'dip nets'. They are restricted in size to 1m long, 0.8m wide and 0.45m deep. Handle lengths should be no longer than 4m. Fishing from boats is prohibited and no other large nets or traps are allowed. As a further precaution, all nets must be tagged and fishermen have photographic ID.

Elvers are attracted to fresh water so to protect stocks, no fishing is permitted within 10m of any river obstruction, dam, inlet, outlet or fish pass that hinders the passage of elvers. A full list of rules can be found in the elver fishing bylaws.

Richard Dearnley for the Environment Agency said:

We recognise the majority of elver fishermen operate responsibly and respect the law. We work closely with the police in detecting illegal fishing and, where we have evidence, won't hesitate to prosecute offenders.

Any illegal or suspicious activity can be reported to the Environment Agency or Crimestoppers. If you would like to report information on environmental crime anonymously, call 0800 555111.

[Press release: West Midlands company director handed penalty by court for waste offences](#)

On 16 February 2017, Jaskaran Bhandal, Director of Oakham Environmental Waste & Recycling Ltd, Oak Farm, Kingswinford, West Midlands pleaded guilty at Wolverhampton Magistrates' Court to 1 count of failing to remove waste from the site, and 1 count of operating a waste site without an authorised environmental permit.

Mr Bhandal was fined £1,332, ordered to pay £3,265 in costs, along with a £120 victim surcharge and disqualified from being a company director for 5 years.

The charges were brought by the Environment Agency under Section 59(5) and 157 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and contrary to Regulations 12(1)(a) and 38(1)(a) and 41 (1)(b) of the Environmental Permitting (England

and Wales) Regulations 2010.

Environment Agency Officers had been working with Oakham Environmental Waste & Recycling Ltd to bring the site into compliance under their environmental permit until it was revoked. This decision was upheld at an appeal made to the Planning Inspectorate, and the company was ordered to remove all the waste from the site by 2 July 2014.

Officers visited the site in November 2015 and saw that significant amounts of new waste had been deposited at the site. Officers made a number of enquires and determined that the waste had been deposited by Oakham Environmental Waste & Recycling Ltd, after their permit had been revoked.

Officers served a Notice to Oakham Environmental Waste & Recycling Ltd in May 2016 to remove all the illegally deposited waste by 19 November 2016. Officers visited the site on 22 November 2016 and noted some attempts had been made to remove the waste but the vast majority remained in situ.

Mr Bhandal was interviewed and admitted to knowing the site did not hold the relevant permits to carry out the work undertaken, he also accepted he was unable to comply with the Notice served but this was due to financial reasons.

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

The successful prosecution of this case should send out a clear message that the Environment Agency is adopting a robust approach to ensuring those who flout the law are brought to justice. Despite extensive previous efforts to work with the company and seek compliance, it became apparent that prosecution remained the only option to deal with this matter appropriately.

In mitigation, the court heard that the defendant had pleaded guilty at the first available opportunity, had co-operated with the Environment Agency during the interview and that he was sorry for the offences committed.

[Press release: Government support for more than 19,000 victims of domestic abuse](#)

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has today (17 February 2017) confirmed that 76 projects across the country will receive a share of £20 million to support

victims of domestic abuse, creating more than 2,200 new bed spaces in refuges and other specialist accommodation.

This will support more than 19,000 victims with somewhere safe to live and rebuild their lives, and provide further access to education, employment and life skills training.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Domestic abuse is a devastating crime that all too often remains hidden. That's why we're determined that no victim will be turned away from the help they need, at the time they need it.

This significant investment shows our clear commitment to supporting and strengthening a resilient network of refuge services across the country, with further specialist support to help victims go on to rebuild their lives.

Last November, the government published its "Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services" setting out what local areas need to put in place to make sure their approach to domestic abuse is collaborative, robust and effective.

This latest funding has been awarded to local areas that will deliver on these priorities – for example by working collaboratively across local authority boundaries and with other partners, including specialist domestic violence service providers to strengthen support.

The funding will support a wide range of services and safe accommodation, including refuges, outreach services, Sanctuary Schemes, which help those at risk of violence to stay safe in their own homes through improved security measures and mainstream local authority accommodation.

Given that victims of domestic abuse will have different needs, many of the projects being supported are tailored towards support for specific groups including women with mental health issues, substance abuse problems, or the particular needs of different ethnic minority communities.

Communities Minister Lord Bourne said:

Domestic abuse ruins lives with many victims forced to leave their homes for their own safety and to access the services they urgently need.

Real change will only happen at the local level and it's these authorities that are best placed to identify the best solutions. We're clear that the victim must always come first and must always be able to access the specialist accommodation help and support they need.

Case studies

Newcastle City Council

This project will look to improve and strengthen the availability of and access to refuges alongside other specialist accommodation including self-contained flats. This will be matched with improved support visits together with dedicated care for victims with complex needs, such as problematic drug use.

While the project is led by Newcastle City Council, it will be supported by 6 neighbouring councils, 9 specialist domestic abuse service and refuge providers, local health partnerships, drug misuse charities, housing providers as well as the local police service and the local Police and Crime Commissioner.

By working across councils and the relevant agencies the project aims to identify victims' needs at a much earlier stage, improve their non-crisis work and offer better resettlement accommodation.

Suffolk Satellite Accommodation and Support

This project is a partnership between Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council and 7 district councils, with support from the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner, Phoebe, Anglia Care Trust, and local refuges.

The aim of the project is to provide more accommodation for victims of domestic abuse who do not meet the criteria to be supported in refuge accommodation. This extra housing will be sourced through the local authority, registered social landlords and the private rented sector.

Working closely with existing refuges, the aim is to create a flexible alternative that also offers specialist support to meet the particular needs of victims with complex needs such as mental health issues or those from a BME background. The 3 refuges in Suffolk will also be able to use these extra spaces as 'move on' accommodation when the risk to the victim has reduced or when the victim is ready for greater independence.

Further information

These latest allocations follow the announcement of the £20 million fund to support victims of domestic abuse made on 3 November 2016.

See the [full list of allocations](#) (PDF, 392KB, 13 pages)

The government has already taken steps to end domestic abuse, support victims and make sure offenders are prosecuted. This includes:

- new powers and laws – a new domestic abuse offence to capture coercive and controlling behaviour, the criminalisation of forced marriage, and the introduction of new stalking laws
- the national roll-out of domestic violence protection orders and the

domestic violence disclosure scheme

- £15 million support for a 3-year Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Service Transformation Fund
- £3.5 million provided in 2015 that funded 46 successful bids from around the country, providing 710 extra bed spaces
- £10 million provided in 2014 to 2016, which benefitted 148 areas to support refuges across the country and boost provision for vulnerable victims of domestic violence