

An inspection of juxtaposed controls

News story

The inspection team anticipate reporting to the Home Secretary by May.



The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration has commenced an inspection of juxtaposed controls.

The team will visit Border Force locations at Coquelles Eurotunnel terminal and Paris Gare du Nord Eurostar terminal in the coming weeks. The scope of this inspection will focus on the quality, including consistency and proportionality, of decision-making by Border Force staff in relation to the application of the Immigration Rules.

While this inspection was not included in my [2022-2023 inspection plan](#), my Plan does include scope for re-inspections or unannounced inspections to reflect in-year developments and areas of emerging interest.

The inspection team anticipate reporting to the Home Secretary by May.

David Neal Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, April 2022

Published 20 April 2022

New rules to protect consumers' hard-earned cash

- Fake reviews and subscription traps stamped out to help consumers get a better deal and protect their hard-earned money
- clamp down on cartels and other business practices that stifle competition, levelling the playing field for businesses doing the right thing
- government gives watchdog more powers to support consumers and crack down on rogue traders – meaning better products, greater choice, and lower prices

Reforms to shield the public from rip-offs and boost competition have been announced by the government today (Wednesday 20 April).

Plans include making it clearly illegal to pay someone to write or host a fake review, so people are not cheated by bogus ratings, and clearer rules for businesses to make it easier for consumers to opt out of subscriptions so they are not stuck paying for things they no longer want.

Prepayment schemes like Christmas savings clubs will have to fully safeguard customers' money through insurance or trust accounts. This will prevent scandals like Farepak, in which the business went bust and thousands of people lost their money.

To beef up the enforcement of consumer protections, the government is delivering on its manifesto promise to give the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) enhanced powers to tackle rip-offs and bad business practices.

The CMA will be able to directly enforce consumer law, including new powers to fine firms up to 10% of their global turnover for mistreating customers. This replaces going through a court process which can take years.

Competitive markets create a level playing field for businesses and give consumers better products, greater choice, and lower prices by encouraging companies to compete for customers. The CMA will have stronger tools to tackle companies colluding to bump-up prices and to combat 'killer acquisitions' in which big businesses snap up rivals before they can launch new products or services.

Consumer Minister Paul Scully said:

We're making sure consumer protections keep pace with a modern, digitised economy.

No longer will you visit a 5 star-reviewed restaurant only to find a burnt lasagne or get caught in a subscription in which there's no

end in sight. Consumers deserve better and the majority of businesses out there doing the right thing deserve protection from rogue traders undermining them.

The average UK household spends around £900 each year influenced by online reviews and spends £60 on unwanted subscriptions.

The reforms underline the government's commitment to seizing the opportunities provided by leaving the EU and adapting to the lessons of the pandemic, which has accelerated the trend towards online shopping and cast a spotlight on bad business practices like fake reviews.

Strengthening consumer protection and enforcement

The government is bolstering consumer rights, strengthening the enforcement powers of the CMA, and supporting consumers in resolving their own disputes without having to go to the courts. Fake reviews will be tackled by consulting on a new law against:

- commissioning someone to write or submit a fake review
- hosting consumer reviews without taking reasonable steps to check they are genuine
- offering or advertising to submit, commission or facilitate fake reviews

'Subscription traps' in which businesses make it difficult to exit a contract will also be stopped. Under new rules, businesses must:

- provide clearer information to consumers before they enter a subscription contract
- issue a reminder to consumers that a free trial or low-cost introductory offer is coming to an end, and a reminder before a contract auto-renews onto a new term
- ensure consumers can exit a contract in a straightforward, cost-effective and timely way

The enforcement of consumer law is also being strengthened. In the 3 years from 2018 to 2019 to 2020 to 2021, the CMA's actions provided a direct financial benefit to consumers worth £7.7 billion. Today's announcement will build on this success.

The CMA, instead of a court, will be able to award compensation to consumers and directly impose financial penalties for:

- breaking consumer protection laws, with penalties worth up to 10% of global annual turnover for businesses or up to £300,000 in the case of an individual
- breaching undertakings given to the CMA, with penalties worth up to 5% of a business' annual global turnover or up to £150,000 for an individual, and additional daily penalties for continued non-compliance
- non-compliance with an information notice, concealing evidence or providing false information, with penalties worth up to 1% of a

business' annual global turnover or up to £30,000 for an individual, and additional daily penalties for continued non-compliance

The government is also supporting consumers and traders to resolve more disputes without court action by improving Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) services in consumer markets. This includes amending the ADR Regulations 2015 to improve the quality and oversight of ADR services, and requiring businesses offering consumers dispute resolution services to be accredited against these regulations.

Matthew Upton, Director of Policy at Citizens Advice, said:

With pressure piling on household budgets, it's good to see action that'll make it easier for people to protect their cash.

The measures to deal with subscription traps are particularly welcome. We hope these will help bring unscrupulous traders to book and stop shoppers being duped by underhand tactics.

Today's new measures to shield online consumers from rip-offs including fake reviews and subscription traps will apply in England, Scotland and Wales. Consumer protection is devolved in Northern Ireland.

Boosting competition

Illegal anticompetitive conduct will be tackled through new measures including strengthening the CMA's evidence-gathering powers and ensuring competition law protects UK consumers from anticompetitive conduct wherever it is carried out, such as companies colluding to bump up prices. Government is also increasing the ability for the CMA to fine businesses abusing their market position, even in smaller markets, by reducing the minimum turnover threshold for immunity from financial penalties from £50 million to £20 million.

On mergers, to reduce bureaucracy and keep the burden on smaller businesses to a minimum, government will exclude mergers between small businesses – where each party's UK turnover is less than £10 million – from the CMA's merger control altogether. The government is also improving the CMA's ability to review 'killer acquisitions' where big businesses snap up prospective rivals before they can launch new services or products.

The government is giving the CMA greater powers to sanction companies refusing to comply with investigations and remedies. Penalties worth up to 1% of a business' annual worldwide turnover can be imposed for non-compliance with the CMA's investigative measures, and up to 5% of annual turnover for non-compliance with remedies. Additional daily penalties can be applied if non-compliance continues.

So the CMA can use market inquiries to its full potential, the government is creating more opportunities for firms to offer binding commitments to resolve

concerns, as well as the ability for the CMA to apply more flexible market investigation remedies.

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the CMA, said:

This is an important milestone towards strengthening the CMA's ability to hold companies to account, promote fair and open markets, and protect UK consumers.

The CMA stands ready to assist the government to ensure that legislation can be brought forward as quickly as possible, so consumers and businesses can benefit.

Competition law is reserved and therefore extends to the whole of the UK.

Notes to editors

New measures requiring legal changes, such as tackling fake reviews, will come into effect on a commencement date that will follow parliamentary approval.

Today's announcement follows the 'reforming competition and consumer policy' consultation launched last year. The government received feedback from businesses, consumers groups, regulators and others to ensure today's reforms provide for the strong and proportionate competition and consumer law and enforcement that consumers and businesses need to thrive.

Consumer protection is devolved to Northern Ireland but reserved for Scotland and Wales. Consumer advice and advocacy were devolved to Scotland on 23 May 2016 by the Scotland Act. Competition policy is reserved for the whole of the United Kingdom.

The government is seeking further evidence on how best to help regulators stamp out other dodgy tactics used to dupe online shoppers. These include 'dark patterns' that manipulate consumers into spending more than they wanted to, and 'sludges' – negative nudges such as when businesses add on extra charges for a product before checkout, on top of the advertised price.

The government is also updating and simplifying the Package Travel and Linked Travel Arrangement Regulations 2018, allowing easier enforcement and compliance with the law by businesses, better flexibility for insolvency protection for non-flight packages and enabling BEIS to improve the quality of information and guidance available.

As the CMA deals with more cross-border cases following EU exit, we are also developing closer ties with our international partners. The government is making overseas disclosures of information held by a UK competition or consumer authority more streamlined, and introducing new powers on investigative assistance.

New rules to protect consumers' hard-earned cash

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investigative assistance.

Britain moves closer to a self-driving revolution

- government sets out changes to The Highway Code to ensure the first self-driving vehicles are introduced safely on UK roads
- changes clarify drivers' responsibilities in self-driving vehicles, including when a driver must be ready to take back control
- future technology could improve and level up transport, easing congestion, cutting emissions and reducing collisions caused by human error

Drivers will be able to experience the full benefits of the first self-driving vehicles when they arrive, as government sets out how they should be driven safely on UK roads.

The government has today (20 April 2022) confirmed planned changes to The Highway Code, responding to a public consultation, continuing to pave the way for safer, more efficient travel.

The changes to the code will help ensure the first wave of technology will be used safely, explaining clearly that while travelling in self-driving mode, motorists must be ready to resume control in a timely way if they are prompted to – such as when they approach motorway exits.

The plans also include a change to current regulation, allowing drivers to view content that is not related to driving on built-in display screens, while the self-driving vehicle is in control. It will, however, still be illegal to use mobile phones in self-driving mode, given the greater risk they pose in distracting drivers as shown in research.

With self-driving technology rapidly developing across the globe, Britain's first vehicles approved for self-driving could be ready for use later this year. Vehicles will undergo rigorous testing and only be approved as self-driving when they have met stringent standards.

The government is continuing to develop a full legal framework for self-driving vehicles to enable the safer and greener movement of people and goods in the UK. The Department for Transport will also work with industry, regulators and safety organisations to ensure drivers can access information, including online, to help them use the vehicles safely.

Transport Minister Trudy Harrison said:

This is a major milestone in our safe introduction of self-driving vehicles, which will revolutionise the way we travel, making our future journeys greener, safer and more reliable.

This exciting technology is developing at pace right here in Great Britain and we're ensuring we have strong foundations in place for drivers when it takes to our roads.

In doing so, we can help improve travel for all while boosting economic growth across the nation and securing Britain's place as a global science superpower.

The development of self-driving vehicles could create around 38,000 new, high-skilled jobs within Britain's industry that would be worth £41.7 billion by 2035.

The measures confirmed today follow a [public consultation launched by the government](#), which found the majority of respondents were broadly supportive of the proposed changes to The Highway Code to clarify drivers' responsibilities in self-driving vehicles.

The introduction of the technology is likely to begin with vehicles travelling at slow speeds on motorways, such as in congested traffic.

Following a landmark call for evidence, the government announced in April last year that [vehicles fitted with automated lane keeping system \(ALKS\) technology could be the first example of self-driving technology](#). Existing technology available on the market is 'assistive', meaning drivers must currently always remain in control and responsible.

Designed for use on a motorway in slow traffic, ALKS enables a vehicle to drive itself in a single lane, up to 37 mph, while maintaining the ability to return control easily and safely to the driver when required.

Meanwhile, the government expects to have a full regulatory framework in place to support the widespread deployment of the technology by 2025, helping to make the movement of people and goods safer, greener and more efficient.

The technology could improve road safety across Britain by reducing human error, which is a contributory factor in 88% of all recorded road collisions.

Steve Gooding, director of the RAC Foundation, said:

The Highway Code has been updated a number of times in recent years to reflect the rapidly changing transport world we live in and these latest additions will help us all understand what we must and must not do as we move forward to an environment where cars drive themselves.

The final part of the jigsaw is to ensure these amendments are

widely communicated to, and understood by, vehicle owners. Vehicle manufacturers and sellers will have a vital role to play in ensuring their customers fully appreciate the capabilities of the cars they buy and the rules that govern them.

Self-driving technology in cars, buses and delivery vehicles could spark the beginning of the end of urban congestion, with traffic lights and vehicles speaking to each other to keep traffic flowing, reducing emissions and improving air quality in our towns and cities.

The technology could also improve access to transport for people with mobility issues and lead to more reliable public transport services, helping to level-up access to transport in historically disconnected and rural areas.

Mike Hawes, SMMT Chief Executive, said:

Amending The Highway Code to reflect the pace of technological change will help clarify what motorists can and can't do when a self-driving feature is engaged, so promoting its safe use.

The technology could be available in the UK later this year and, with the right regulations in place, consumers are set to benefit from safer, more efficient journeys while the UK will strengthen its position as a global leader in the deployment of self-driving technology.

[New pilot requirement for tree suppliers announced to strengthen UK biosecurity](#)

A new requirement for the forestry sector will be piloted to combat the threat from pests and diseases and further strengthen UK biosecurity, Defra and the Forestry Commission announced today (Wednesday 20 April).

The Biosecure Procurement Requirement means that, from June 2022, applicants for funding under the England Woodland Creation Offer and the Future Farming Tree Health Pilot must commit to sourcing their trees from suppliers who are either accredited under the Plant Healthy Certification Scheme or who have passed a [Ready to Plant assessment, as provided by Fera Science Ltd](#).

The threat of pests and disease is significant and growing as a result of globalisation and climate change. Introducing the Biosecure Procurement

Requirement Pilot now will address these risks to our biosecurity, minimise the net loss to our existing treescape, and serve to realise our long-term vision for our trees and woodlands.

This pilot will enable suppliers to demonstrate that their operational practices comply with the industry benchmark [Plant Health Management Standard](#). This Standard includes protocols which are key to developing a robust plant health management system and sets out practical requirements for suppliers to help protect the plant supply chain.

Professor Nicola Spence, UK Chief Plant Health Officer, said:

Our biosecurity standards are among the highest in Europe. As we build back greener, we must consider new and ambitious ways to not simply maintain these standards but further strengthen them.

By leading the way with this new pilot, we are addressing the significant and increasing threat of pests and diseases and building a strong biosecurity culture across the country.

Sir William Worsley, Forestry Commission Chair, said:

Our nation's biosecurity will be integral to the success of our tree planting ambitions.

This pilot will ensure that the forestry sector plays its role in upholding rigorous standards of biosecurity and in doing so, safeguards our much-loved trees and forests for generations to come.

The launch of the Biosecure Procurement Requirement Pilot fulfils a commitment within the England Trees Action Plan, which sets out our long-term plan for England's trees, woodlands and forests. Healthy trees and plants benefit people, the environment, and the economy. Protecting the long-term welfare of our treescapes will underpin Government efforts to treble tree planting rates by the end of this Parliament and plant 30,000 hectares of trees across the UK per year by 2025, as well as form part of wider efforts to achieve Net Zero by 2050.

For more information on the Biosecure Procurement Pilot Requirement, [read this Forestry Commission blog](#).

The Biosecure Procurement Requirement Pilot will run for 12 months from June 2022.