

# Council fined for undertaking work without a marine licence

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council appeared in court charged with carrying out a licensable marine activity other than in accordance with a marine licence granted by the Marine Management Organisation.

The court heard how the offence took place at Hilbre Island, located in the mouth of the Dee Estuary, off the coast of the Wirral peninsula. It is an environmentally sensitive area and part of a local nature reserve.

Following a partial cliff collapse in 2016, Wirral MBC commissioned a report to investigate the stability of the area. The report set out several options to prevent further collapsing and the council chose the option of infilling a cave in the cliffside. The report noted at this time that a marine licence would be required for these works.

On 24 July 2019 contractors, under the instruction of Wirral MBC, began a construction project to shore-up the cave. The project involved the infilling of the cave with a combination of polyurethane slabs and polyurethane expanding foam.

On 17 August 2019 a storm hit the island. The resultant action of the sea washed parts of the foam away over several days and a quantity of this entered the marine environment. On 23 August 2019 the contractors reapplied expanding foam. The foam then caught fire and burned for three days until the entire contents of the cave filling (polyurethane slabs and foam) were burnt out. A quantity of this entered the marine environment. Clean-up efforts were made by the Council, the contractors, and local volunteers.

The works associated with the cave infilling were not carried out under a marine licence, in that neither the Council nor the contractors applied to the MMO for a marine licence. This is contrary to Section 65 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. The foam used was not designated safe to use in the marine environment.

In sentencing, District Judge (Magistrates' Court) Clark found the actions of the Council to have been negligent.

A representative from the council pleaded guilty to the charge. They were fined £8,000, ordered to pay £3,894.22 in costs and a £150 victim surcharge. The District Judge gave the council credit for an early guilty plea, noted the council had been cooperative with the MMO's investigation, had taken steps to rectify the damage that had been caused and said he recognised imposing a larger fine would negatively impact the service the Council provides for the public.

An MMO spokesperson said:

This case shows the importance of applying for a marine licence before works are undertaken. Had marine experts been able to look at the proposals before works were undertaken these substances would not have been approved for use and would not have entered the marine environment.

In cases like these, MMO will always take proportionate and appropriate action, including prosecution, to ensure the marine environment is protected.

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## [New partnership reaffirms Dstl's commitment to inclusion](#)

Press release

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) has teamed up with Women in Data as part of ongoing work to address the gender imbalance in science and technology.



It will also help ensure recruitment opportunities reach groups currently underrepresented in science and technology.

Gender Equality champion and Chief of Mathematical Sciences Dr Philippa Spencer said:

Dstl is dedicated to creating an inclusive workplace in which people can flourish.

We have recognised there is a gender imbalance across STEM and, with others, are working to address this problem but, of course, more needs to be done.

Our partnership with Women in Data is an important part of these

ongoing efforts, the statistics show that teams with mixed genders do produce better results.

[Philippa](#) is marking her 20th year with Dstl and her accolades includes a 2019 Women in Defence award for Outstanding Contribution to Defence. Last year she was made an OBE for her work in the fight against COVID-19.

[Women in Data](#) aims to encourage more females into data-related jobs and promotes roles on its online board from relevant organisations.

It holds events and profiles role model women working in data science, statistics and other related disciplines.

Executive Gender Equality Champion and Chief Technical Officer Andy Bell said:

Women work at all levels across Dstl and have been responsible for incredible achievements and scientific breakthroughs which have benefitted our armed forces and the UK.

We hope this new partnership will help show that Dstl is a fantastic place to work and will encourage more women, who may never have thought about working in Defence, to consider our great opportunities.

There has never been a more exciting time to work for Dstl as we work towards the UK's goal of becoming a science superpower.

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## [UK launches review of steel tariff quotas for imports from Russia and Belarus](#)

[The Trade Remedies Authority \(TRA\)](#) has today (Wednesday 6 April) initiated a [Tariff Rate Quota \(TRQ\) review of steel imports](#) that are part of the UK's safeguard trade remedy measure. The TRA will assess whether the tariff rate quotas for Russia and Belarus should be re-allocated to avoid a potential shortage of steel in the UK.

## **UK to consider adjusting tariff rate quotas to ensure a steady supply of steel**

As with any safeguard measure, the UK has given all importing countries a quota to import a certain amount of steel at a basic tariff rate into the UK. Once their quota is exhausted, they have to pay a higher rate. Exporters from Russia and Belarus may not be able to fulfil their quotas because the UK has imposed sanctions on some imports from these countries, including steel. Reallocating the Russian and Belarus quotas could help ensure a regular supply of steel needed for construction, engineering, the automotive industries and other uses.

The TRA's proposed course of action will be to redistribute the country-specific TRQs for the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus to other exporting countries. For more detail of this proposal, view the initiation documents for this review on the [TRA's public file](#).

## **A trade remedy framework which adapts to changing circumstances**

Tariff Rate Quotas (TRQs) are part of the World Trade Organization (WTO) framework. They specify how much of a product can be imported from a country before its imports are subject to higher tariffs. The UK's trade remedies system follows WTO rules and is designed to make sure UK industries are not damaged by unfair trade practices or unexpected surges in imports. The TRA manages the UK's trade remedy measures and has extended a safeguard measure countering steel imports which the UK inherited from the EU system when it left the European Union. The UK has the power to review its Tariff Rate Quotas on imports covered by safeguard measures if circumstances change after the measure is set. This TRQ Review is an economic adjustment to respond to a change of circumstances. TRQs are also reviewed regularly and liberalised progressively.

## **What this means for importers and users of steel in the UK**

The TRA will review steel Tariff Rate Quotas for the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus that are part of the UK's steel safeguard measure and decide if the tariff rate quotas held by Russia and Belarus should be reallocated. The two product categories which may be affected are category 1 (non-alloy and other alloy hot rolled sheets and strips, used in yellow goods, construction, tube-making and the production of downstream steel products) and category 13 (rebars, which are used in construction, the automotive industry, engineering and white goods manufacture).

Oliver Griffiths, TRA Chief Executive, said:

The TRA has the discretion to act quickly when there's a change of

circumstances which affects the UK economy. This review looks to address the risk of a shortage of steel into the UK as a result of sanctions on Russia and Belarus. Reallocating quotas should help keep steel prices down for construction and other domestic industries.

## **Register your interest in this TRQ review**

Businesses which think they may be affected by a change in the quotas (for instance, importers of steel and businesses which use imported steel) can visit the [TRA's public file to find more information](#). You can also [register your interest in the review on the TRA's online case platform](#) and submit any comments to the TRA by Tuesday 12 April.

### **Background information/Notes to editors**

- Safeguard measures are one of the three types of trade remedies – along with anti-dumping measures which counter goods being dumped in countries at prices below their normal price in their country of origin and countervailing measures against countervailable subsidies – that are allowed under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules.
- Trade remedy investigations were carried out by the EU Commission on the UK's behalf until the UK left the EU.
- The Trade Remedies Authority is the UK body that now investigates whether trade remedies measures are needed.
- Forty-four EU trade remedies measures that were of interest to UK producers were carried across into UK law when the UK left the EU and the TRA needs to review each one to check if it is suitable for UK needs.
- As part of this process, the TRA reviewed a safeguard measure on certain steel products, reporting its recommendation in June 2021. The TRA recommended that measures should be extended on some steel products but removed on others, where they were not needed. The TRA has since been asked to reconsider this decision and this process is under way. The reconsideration has been 'called in' by the Secretary of State for International Trade and the TRA will complete the reconsideration under her direction.
- The UK regularly reviews its tariff rate quotas (TRQs) to make sure its safeguard measures remain up to date and useful. This is not part of the reconsideration process.

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**[Prevalence of COVID-19 remains at high](#)**

# Levels across the country

The findings from Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI, covering 8 March to 31 March 2022 (round 19 of the study), show that prevalence in England during this period was 6.37%.

This is the highest recorded figure since the beginning of the study in May 2020 and significantly up on the 2.88% recorded in round 18 (8 February to 1 March 2022).

This means that during the period in which swabs were collected, approximately 1 in 16 people were infected with the virus.

Dame Jenny Harries, Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), said:

These latest study results are another reminder that the pandemic is not over, and there is still a real risk to many of us catching COVID-19 with infection rates so high.

That is why it is sensible to wear a mask in crowded, enclosed spaces, keep indoor spaces ventilated and stay away from others if you have any symptoms of a respiratory illness, including COVID-19.

Vaccination continues to prevent a high number of cases resulting in severe disease, hospitalisation and death and remains the best way to protect us all.

If you have not yet come forward for your primary or booster vaccine I would urge you to do so straight away – the NHS vaccine programme is there to help you and the sooner you are vaccinated the sooner you and your family and friends will be protected.

I'd like to thank each and every REACT participant for contributing to what has been a vital study throughout the course of the pandemic in giving us insight into how COVID-19 has impacted the country.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Thanks to our plan to tackle COVID-19, we are leading the way in learning to live with the virus. We have made huge progress due to the success of our world-leading vaccination programme, access to antivirals for vulnerable people and increased scientific and public understanding about how to manage risk.

Despite high infection rates, the population now has much stronger protection against COVID-19 than at any other point in the

pandemic.

Vaccines remain our best defence and we are now offering spring boosters to the elderly, care home residents and the most vulnerable – so please come forward to protect yourself, your family, and your community, and continue to follow public health guidance if you test positive.

Professor Paul Elliott, director of the REACT programme from Imperial's School of Public Health, said:

These trends are concerning since when a very high number of people are infected, this may lead to more people becoming seriously ill and needing to go to hospital.

Although restrictions have ended, I would urge people to still behave cautiously to help protect others who might be vulnerable and avoid contact with other people if you have symptoms. This will help to slow the spread of the virus and lessen its impact on the NHS and our lives more broadly as we enter this next phase of the epidemic.

Kelly Beaver, CEO at Ipsos MORI, said:

The high prevalence of COVID-19 the REACT study has found in the population highlights the need for continued vigilance as, as a society, we learn to live with COVID-19.

Over the course of REACT over 3.5 million people in England have taken part and have contributed to the enormous success of the study. We'd like to thank all of those people who took part over the last 2 years for helping provide this invaluable resource to government.

The main findings from the report are as follows:

There were 6,902 positives from 109,181 swabs in round 19, giving an overall weighted prevalence of 6.37%. This is an increase in weighted prevalence of over 2-fold from round 18, where the figure stood at 2.88%.

Weighted prevalence was very high and increased between rounds 18 and 19 in all age brackets. Prevalence was highest in 5 to 11-year olds at 8.81%, nearly double the rate reported in the same age bracket in round 18.

There was a possible decrease in prevalence within round 19 in those aged 5 to 17 and a possible plateauing prevalence in those aged 18 to 35 and those aged 35 to 54, but a within-round increasing trend in those aged 55 and over.

Overall, the analyses showed a within-round reproductive number (R) of 1.10

in those aged 18 to 34 years, 1.04 in those aged 35 to 54 years and 1.12 in those aged 55 and over.

A total of 3,383 viral lineages were determined from the 4,038 positive samples up to 22 March; 89.7% (3,035) of these lineages corresponded to BA.2 or its sub-lineages, and 10.2% (346) to BA.1 and its sub-lineages.

There was just one case of the AY.4 Delta sub-lineage detected and one case of BA.3, while there was additional detection of both the XE and XL recombinants.

Exponential models estimated a daily growth advantage for BA.2 of 0.11 compared to all other Omicron sub-lineages. These models estimate that as of 22 March 2022 the proportion of BA.2 in all recorded infections across the country was 94.7%.

Weighted prevalence in round 19 was higher in all regions of the country compared to round 18, ranging from 5.28% in the West Midlands to 8.13% in the South West. The recorded prevalence in the next highest region, the East of England, was 7.17%.

At a lower-tier local authority level, of the 10 highest smoothed estimates of prevalence based on a nearest neighbour method, 7 were in the South West – Plymouth, Cornwall, South Hams, Torridge, Torbay, West Devon and Exeter. The other 3 highest – Braintree, Colchester and Maldon – were in the East of England.

The rate of prevalence among those who had been in contact with a positive case stood at 17.8% compared to 4.00% in those without such contact.

Among those who tested positive and reported on symptoms, 26.7% reported no symptoms in round 19 compared to 28.6% in round 18.

Over 109,000 volunteers in England took part in the study to examine the levels of COVID-19 in the general population between 8 March and 31 March.

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## **New calorie labelling rules come into force to improve nation's health**

- Government also encouraging smaller businesses to adopt calorie labelling as part of its drive to improve the nation's health and tackle obesity levels
- Part of government's ongoing commitment to level up the nation's health

New rules requiring calorie information to be displayed on menus and food labels come into force today (Wednesday April 6 2022).



The changes – which were approved by parliament in 2021 – mean it is now a legal requirement for large businesses with more than 250 employees, including cafes, restaurants, and takeaways to display calorie information of non-prepacked food and soft drinks.

Calorie information will need to be displayed on menus, online menus, third party apps, food delivery platforms and food labels at the point a customer is making their food and drink choices. As well as listing the calories for each food item, menus and labels will also need to include daily recommended calorie needs.

The legislation, which forms part of the government's strategy to tackle obesity, aims to ensure people can make more informed, healthier choices when it comes to eating food out or ordering takeaways. Displaying calorie information may also encourage businesses to provide lower calorie options for their customers.

It is estimated that overweight and obesity related conditions across the UK cost the NHS £6.1 billion each year. Almost two-thirds (63%) of adults in England are overweight or living with obesity – and 40% of children leave primary school overweight or obese. Obesity is also the second biggest cause of cancer across the UK.

The Covid pandemic has highlighted the impact that obesity can have on people's health, and as part of its drive to level up the health of the nation, the government is also asking smaller businesses to adopt calorie labelling.

Public Health Minister Maggie Throup said:

It is crucial that we all have access to the information we need to maintain a healthier weight, and this starts with knowing how calorific our food is. We are used to knowing this when we are shopping in the supermarket, but this isn't the case when we eat out or get a take-away.

As part of our efforts to tackle disparities and level up the nation's health, these measures are an important building block to making it as easy as possible for people to make healthier food choices.

The most recent official data shows that in 2019/20, there were over one million hospital admissions where obesity was the primary or secondary cause, an increase of 17% on 2018/19 when there were 876,000 obesity-related admissions.

Bridget Turner, Director of Policy, Campaigns and Improvement at Diabetes UK, said:

Obesity is the single greatest risk factor for type 2 diabetes and

there are an estimated 13.6 million people at increased risk of developing the condition in the UK.

Tackling this health crisis is vital, so the government's commitment to make large takeaway, cafe and restaurant chains calorie label the food they sell is a welcome move towards reducing the rising levels of obesity in the UK.

Diabetes UK campaigned strongly for these measures through our Food Upfront campaign. We hope it will bring these large, out of home businesses more in line with the food retail sector when it comes to giving people clear calorie information for the food they buy, hopefully leading to improved menus and healthier options.

There are some exemptions to the legislation including food that is only on a menu for 30 days of the year or less and all alcohol drinks above 1.2% ABV.

The legislation will be enforced by local authorities with the Department of Health and Social Care supporting them with the additional costs of enforcing the policy. Local Authorities are encouraged first to have conversations with those businesses who are not complying with the law. Local authorities can issue improvement notices. Any person who fails to comply with a notice could be guilty of an offence and could be fined £2,500.

Buying food on the go or getting takeaways are increasingly important to people. On average the portions of food or drink that people eat out or eat as takeaway meals contain twice as many calories as their equivalent bought in a shop, where labelling is much more common. Research suggests that food people eat outside the home makes up 20-25% of adult calorie intake

In a survey by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities on calorie reduction, 79% of respondents said they think that menus should include the number of calories in food and drinks.

The types of businesses covered by the requirement include:

- restaurants, fast food outlets, cafes, pubs and supermarkets
- home delivery services and third-party apps selling food that is in scope of the legislation
- cafes and takeaways within larger shops and venues, such as supermarkets, department stores, and entertainment venues such as cinemas
- specialist food stores, delicatessens, sweet shops and bakeries
- contract catering – for example, for events and canteens, and
- domestic transport businesses including planes, trains, ferries and other forms of water transport within the UK.

As part of the government's obesity strategy we have also introduced regulations to restrict the promotion of less healthy foods by location and volume price in store and online, which come into force in October 2022, and through the Health and Care Bill, restrictions on the advertising of less healthy foods on TV before 9pm and via online paid for advertising.