

News story: Scottish employers to repay employees thousands

The UK Government has published a list of the names of more than 24 employers headquartered in Scotland, found to have underpaid more than 300 Scottish workers by a total of £60,000.

Employers underpaid workers by taking deductions from wages for uniforms, underpaying apprentices and failing to pay travel time.

£1.42m in back pay has been identified for 23,000 workers across the UK, with the employers fined additional £1.97m.

UK-wide companies including Home Bargains and Card Factory (who have significant presences in Scotland) have also been identified as underpaying their employees.

The back pay identified by HMRC affects more UK workers than in any previous list and has generated record fines of £1.95m.

The earliest underpayment dated back to 2011, with the most recent happening this year (2018).

Business Minister Andrew Griffiths said:

Our priority is making sure workers know their rights and are getting the pay they worked hard for. Employers who don't do the right thing face fines as well as being hit with the bill for backpay.

The UK's lowest paid workers have had the fastest wage growth in 20 years thanks to the introduction of the National Living Wage and today's list serves as a reminder to all employers to check they are getting their workers' pay right.

UK Government Minister Lord Duncan said:

It beggars belief that some employers think they can get away with underpaying staff and tricking them out of the wage to which they are legally entitled. That's why we are naming, shaming and fining these companies. We won't stop until every employee in Scotland is paid correctly and fairly for their labours.

The top 5 reasons for National Minimum and Living Wage underpayments in this list were:

- Taking deductions from wages for costs such as uniforms

- Underpaying apprentices
- Failing to pay travel time
- Misusing the accommodation offset
- Using the wrong time periods for calculating pay.

Low Pay Commission Chairman Bryan Sanderson said:

It is crucial that employers understand their responsibilities and workers know their rights around the minimum wage. That is why active enforcement and effective communication from UK Government is so important.

It is therefore encouraging to see that HMRC has recovered unpaid wages for the largest number of workers yet in this round of naming and shaming. I'm confident that the UK Government will continue to pursue underpayment of the minimum wage vigorously.

Funding for minimum wage enforcement has more than doubled since 2015, with the UK Government set to spend £26.3m in 2018/19.

The scheme is in its fifth year and calls out employers who have fallen foul of minimum wage laws, so far identifying £10.8m in back pay for around 90,000 workers, with more than 1,900 employers fined a total of £8.4m. HMRC has launched a series of webinars, available on GOV.UK, to help employers check that they are complying with the law.

The UK Government is currently running a campaign to raise awareness of the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage rates, which increased on 1 April 2018, as well as encouraging workers who have been underpaid to complain to HMRC. The campaign website has had more than 600,000 visits since the campaign began on 1 April.

Employers who pay workers less than the minimum wage have to pay back arrears of wages to the worker at current minimum wage rates and face financial penalties of up to 200% of arrears, capped at £20,000 per worker.

For more information about your pay, or if you think you might be being underpaid, get advice and guidance at gov.uk/checkyourpay. Workers can also seek advice from workplace experts Acas.

[News story: Scottish employers to repay employees thousands](#)

The UK Government has published a list of the names of more than 24 employers headquartered in Scotland, found to have underpaid more than 300 Scottish

workers by a total of £60,000.

Employers underpaid workers by taking deductions from wages for uniforms, underpaying apprentices and failing to pay travel time.

£1.42m in back pay has been identified for 23,000 workers across the UK, with the employers fined additional £1.97m.

UK-wide companies including Home Bargains and Card Factory (who have significant presences in Scotland) have also been identified as underpaying their employees.

The back pay identified by HMRC affects more UK workers than in any previous list and has generated record fines of £1.95m.

The earliest underpayment dated back to 2011, with the most recent happening this year (2018).

Business Minister Andrew Griffiths said:

Our priority is making sure workers know their rights and are getting the pay they worked hard for. Employers who don't do the right thing face fines as well as being hit with the bill for backpay.

The UK's lowest paid workers have had the fastest wage growth in 20 years thanks to the introduction of the National Living Wage and today's list serves as a reminder to all employers to check they are getting their workers' pay right.

UK Government Minister Lord Duncan said:

It beggars belief that some employers think they can get away with underpaying staff and tricking them out of the wage to which they are legally entitled. That's why we are naming shaming and fining these companies. We won't stop until every employee in Scotland is paid correctly and fairly for their labours.

The top 5 reasons for National Minimum and Living Wage underpayments in this list were:

- Taking deductions from wages for costs such as uniforms
- Underpaying apprentices
- Failing to pay travel time
- Misusing the accommodation offset
- Using the wrong time periods for calculating pay.

Low Pay Commission Chairman Bryan Sanderson said:

It is crucial that employers understand their responsibilities and workers know their rights around the minimum wage. That is why active enforcement and effective communication from UK Government is so important.

It is therefore encouraging to see that HMRC has recovered unpaid wages for the largest number of workers yet in this round of naming and shaming. I'm confident that the UK Government will continue to pursue underpayment of the minimum wage vigorously.

Funding for minimum wage enforcement has more than doubled since 2015, with the UK Government set to spend £26.3m in 2018/19.

The scheme is in its fifth year and calls out employers who have fallen foul of minimum wage laws, so far identifying £10.8m in back pay for around 90,000 workers, with more than 1,900 employers fined a total of £8.4m. HMRC has launched a series of webinars, available on GOV.UK, to help employers check that they are complying with the law.

The UK Government is currently running a campaign to raise awareness of the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage rates, which increased on 1 April 2018, as well as encouraging workers who have been underpaid to complain to HMRC. The campaign website has had more than 600,000 visits since the campaign began on 1 April.

Employers who pay workers less than the minimum wage have to pay back arrears of wages to the worker at current minimum wage rates and face financial penalties of up to 200% of arrears, capped at £20,000 per worker.

For more information about your pay, or if you think you might be being underpaid, get advice and guidance at gov.uk/checkyourpay. Workers can also seek advice from workplace experts Acas.

Press release: 1,000 young people to be trained as Democracy Ambassadors

Today during National Democracy Week, the Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith, will be unveiling a new programme aimed at inspiring school-age young people in full time education to engage with democracy from an earlier stage.

The Democracy Ambassador's scheme has been launched to tackle an imbalance in democratic engagement between the UK's older and younger generations.

Research revealed by the most recent Hansard Society Audit of Political

Engagement indicates that 18 to 34 year olds are much less likely to feel confident in their knowledge of politics than those who are 35 and above.

Only 39% of 18-24 year olds and 35% of 25-34 year olds claim to know at least a 'fair amount' on the subject.

The Democracy Ambassadors programme, will see 1,000 13-16 year olds recruited across the UK to inform their peers about our country's democratic processes and promote participation. It is intended to increase school-age young people's confidence on the subject, ahead of reaching voting age at 18. People can apply to register to vote at 16, with registration a first, vital step on the path to full democratic engagement. The programme will complement activity aimed at the same age group delivered in schools.

The scheme will be delivered in partnership with Young Citizens and target those who are less likely to be registered to vote when able, including those from disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds. It is being announced as we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the 1928 Equal Franchise Act this week, which gave women equal voting rights.

Ambassadors training will include:

- educating them on how democracy works in England at both a national and local level
- equipping them with the skills to share this knowledge further
- a challenge to reach out to 100 of their peers and encourage

Young Citizens hosted a pilot session for Democracy Ambassadors yesterday to trial key components of the training scheme with a host of 13-16 year olds. Feedback will prove vital in making sure that the final programme meets the needs of the target audience when it's rolled out across England later this year.

Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith said:

National Democracy Week is about inspiring, empowering and engaging people in democracy. School students in particular have told me they want the information and skills to be able to cast their votes when they become adults.

The Democracy Ambassadors scheme has been designed for this age-group as they head towards voting age, to build a legacy of engaged future citizens.

CEO of Young Citizens, Tom Franklin, said:

For nearly thirty years Young Citizens has been championing the importance of young people's democratic participation. Young people are not apathetic to politics, they just need to be given opportunities and encouragement to get involved.

Through Democracy Ambassadors we hope some of our youngest citizens can boost their understanding of how our democracy works and give their peers the confidence to get informed and involved locally on the issues they feel passionately about.

[Press release: Cooperation the key to tackling pennywort](#)

The Environment Agency has called on Thames river users to keep working together to control floating pennywort. More than 63 tonnes of the invasive water plant has been removed from the Thames over the winter and spring but there is still more to do.

Because of the efforts of the Environment Agency and some local groups, where there were large rafts of the plant in some areas, there are now only a few small traces of regrowth. The Environment Agency continues to monitor and remove new growth of this very invasive and destructive plant. However, the summer is the peak season for floating pennywort growth which can have detrimental impacts on watercourses. Large blooms of the plant affect the oxygen content of rivers, reduce biodiversity, can damage important habitats and potentially increase flood risk.

As part of the annual maintenance programme, the Environment Agency has been managing floating pennywort for several years in locations such as the River Wey and the Foudry Brook. But more help and support is needed from the public and river users if we are to succeed in controlling the spread of this destructive plant.

Daryl Buck, from the Environment Agency, said:

We actively monitor more than 200km of the River Thames. Our aim is to eradicate floating pennywort from the main River Thames completely, but we can only achieve this with the continued cooperation of key members of the community.

Early intervention is the most efficient way to keep on top of this damaging plant as it can grow up to 20cm per day! We are urging riverside owners to keep an eye on their watercourse and report any new growth to us. We also would like to hear from river users such

as anglers, boaters and canoeists who may come across the plant when out and about enjoying the river.

One success story so far has been the work undertaken earlier this year in the Abbey River near Chertsey. Floating pennywort established itself last season in the popular watercourse, causing all kinds of issues for river users like anglers and kayakers as well as landowners.

Ian Penny, secretary of a local angling club, said:

This non-native plant is very aggressive and plays havoc for fish and plant life. The Environment Agency did an absolutely fantastic job of totally removing the floating pennywort from over a mile stretch of the river. Everyone who enjoys the river has a responsibility to help the situation by reporting any new sightings via www.plantracker.org.uk.

Richard Atkinson, Policy Officer for British Canoeing, said:

British Canoeing takes its environmental responsibility very seriously and wants all water users to have fun and enjoy the natural environment. Non-native invasive species like pennywort have a significant impact on biodiversity, the environment and paddling.

We will be encouraging our members to report any sightings via the app and by reinforcing the importance of the check, clean, dry procedure after paddling.

People can visit www.plantracker.org.uk or download the Plant Tracker app co-developed by the Environment Agency to enable river users to record sightings of floating pennywort to help concentrate removal efforts where they are most needed.

Floating pennywort was introduced into the UK as an ornamental plant. For more information pond owners are encouraged to go to the plantwise campaign at <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/beplantwise/pondowner/index.cfm>

Ends

Notes to Editors

Photographs available on request

Floating pennywort is an aggressive invasive non-native species of plant, introduced to this country as an ornamental aquatic plant. It tends to favour slower moving watercourses. It is now widespread in southern and eastern

England, including parts of the River Thames and its backwaters between Reading and Kingston and the River Wey. The Environment Agency is under no obligation to remove floating pennywort, however we do have discretion to remove it under our statutory powers. Riparian owners are also not obliged to remove it, unless it can be shown that they planted it, though if it is on their land they do have a duty to take reasonable action to ensure it does not cause damage to neighbouring properties. What you can do to help Please continue to help us. If you see floating pennywort in the river Thames or its tributaries please report its location by:

- Emailing us: enquiries_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk

Not sure if it is floating pennywort?

- Look at the plant tracker website or download the app at www.plantracker.org.uk
- You can also report sightings using the plant tracker app. Are you a boater?
- Don't pass through clumps of the plant. It can break off and spread downstream or carry it upstream.
- Visually check your craft regularly and, if safe to do so, remove any visible weed, placing it well away from any river or other water body.

All media enquiries: 0800 141 2743. Or e-mail us at southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk Follow us on Twitter at @EnvAgencySE

[Press release: Cooperation the key to tackling pennywort](#)

The Environment Agency has called on Thames river users to keep working together to control floating pennywort. More than 63 tonnes of the invasive water plant has been removed from the Thames over the winter and spring but there is still more to do.

Because of the efforts of the Environment Agency and some local groups, where there were large rafts of the plant in some areas, there are now only a few small traces of regrowth. The Environment Agency continues to monitor and remove new growth of this very invasive and destructive plant. However, the summer is the peak season for floating pennywort growth which can have detrimental impacts on watercourses. Large blooms of the plant affect the oxygen content of rivers, reduce biodiversity, can damage important habitats and potentially increase flood risk.

As part of the annual maintenance programme, the Environment Agency has been managing floating pennywort for several years in locations such as the River Wey and the Foudry Brook. But more help and support is needed from the public and river users if we are to succeed in controlling the spread of this

destructive plant.

Daryl Buck, from the Environment Agency, said:

We actively monitor more than 200km of the River Thames. Our aim is to eradicate floating pennywort from the main River Thames completely, but we can only achieve this with the continued cooperation of key members of the community.

Early intervention is the most efficient way to keep on top of this damaging plant as it can grow up to 20cm per day! We are urging riverside owners to keep an eye on their watercourse and report any new growth to us. We also would like to hear from river users such as anglers, boaters and canoeists who may come across the plant when out and about enjoying the river.

One success story so far has been the work undertaken earlier this year in the Abbey River near Chertsey. Floating pennywort established itself last season in the popular watercourse, causing all kinds of issues for river users like anglers and kayakers as well as landowners.

Ian Penny, secretary of a local angling club, said:

This non-native plant is very aggressive and plays havoc for fish and plant life. The Environment Agency did an absolutely fantastic job of totally removing the floating pennywort from over a mile stretch of the river. Everyone who enjoys the river has a responsibility to help the situation by reporting any new sightings via www.plantracker.org.uk.

Richard Atkinson, Policy Officer for British Canoeing, said:

British Canoeing takes its environmental responsibility very seriously and wants all water users to have fun and enjoy the natural environment. Non-native invasive species like pennywort have a significant impact on biodiversity, the environment and paddling.

We will be encouraging our members to report any sightings via the app and by reinforcing the importance of the check, clean, dry procedure after paddling.

People can visit www.plantracker.org.uk or download the Plant Tracker app co-developed by the Environment Agency to enable river users to record sightings of floating pennywort to help concentrate removal efforts where they are most needed.

Floating pennywort was introduced into the UK as an ornamental plant. For more information pond owners are encouraged to go to the plantwise campaign at <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/beplantwise/pondowner/index.cfm>

Ends

Notes to Editors

Photographs available on request

Floating pennywort is an aggressive invasive non-native species of plant, introduced to this country as an ornamental aquatic plant. It tends to favour slower moving watercourses. It is now widespread in southern and eastern England, including parts of the River Thames and its backwaters between Reading and Kingston and the River Wey.

The Environment Agency is under no obligation to remove floating pennywort, however we do have discretion to remove it under our statutory powers.

Riparian owners are also not obliged to remove it, unless it can be shown that they planted it, though if it is on their land they do have a duty to take reasonable action to ensure it does not cause damage to neighbouring properties.

What you can do to help

Please continue to help us. If you see floating pennywort in the river Thames or its tributaries please report its location by:

- Emailing us: enquiries_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk

Not sure if it is floating pennywort?

- Look at the plant tracker website or download the app at www.planttracker.org.uk
- You can also report sightings using the plant tracker app.

Are you a boater?

- Don't pass through clumps of the plant. It can break off and spread downstream or carry it upstream.
- Visually check your craft regularly and, if safe to do so, remove any visible weed, placing it well away from any river or other water body.

All media enquiries: 0800 141 2743. Or e-mail us at southeastpressofficel@environment-agency.gov.uk

Follow us on Twitter at @EnvAgencySE