

Press release: Maritime fees increase will bring extra investment for services

From 13 November 2018, the Maritime & Coastguard Agency (MCA) will increase most of its fees across the whole of the UK.

The fee increases have been carefully planned, with a public consultation carried out in 2016, so industry and all those affected have been involved every step of the way. As a result of this active consultation with industry, it was agreed to introduce some fees in stages to reduce the impact on both businesses and individuals.

Consideration was also given to the impact on small-scale operators. The survey fee increase should only affect 11% of fishing vessels – about 600 – as only those 15 metres in length or over need to be surveyed.

How the fee increases work

A phased increase in fees will cover fees to survey a vessel and the seafarer medical examination fee.

The hourly vessel survey rate will increase in two stages: i) from the current £94 per hour to £120 per hour in November 2018; ii) from £120 to £147 per hour in November 2019.

The Seafarer Medical Examination Fee will increase in three stages from £80 to £115. The increases will be from £80 to £95 (November 2018), £95 to £105 (November 2019) and £105 to £115 (November 2020).

All other fees will increase in a single increment from 13 November. You can find out more information about the MCA's fees increases on our [main fees page](#).

Press release: Welsh language programming set to benefit from a multi-million pound boost from the UK Government

Millions of pounds of additional funding will be injected into Welsh language

programming as part of a UK Government boost for the independent broadcast sector, it has been announced today (19 October) by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Jeremy Wright.

A share of the fund which aims to halt the decline of UK produced children's content will be used to commission Welsh language programming and content, stimulating the creation of dynamic and distinctive Welsh language productions from the independent sector.

The UK Government investment will be used to reverse the growing trend of airing repeats and facilitate the creation of Welsh language programmes that can repeat the success of all-time favourites such as Fireman Sam. It will also include:

- A multi-million pound boost for commercial radio; and
- A special fund to help fledgling production companies develop and pitch their original ideas to make them a reality

The Contestable Fund recognises the significance that Welsh language productions have had on the cultural and social life of Wales, which is why the Department for Digital, Media, Culture and Sport has aimed to allocate 5% of the available budget to Welsh and other indigenous UK languages.

The Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns said:

This funding announcement will provide a significant boost to Welsh language programme creators, helping to secure a whole new generation of young Welsh language programme viewers.

With this UK Government investment, the thriving Welsh language broadcast sector will be able to build on its success and create distinctive, captivating programmes that will educate and entertain the growing number of Welsh language speakers in the country.

Production levels of new children's content have declined over the past decade, with public service broadcasters spending roughly 40% less than they did in 2006. As a result a significant amount of children's programming on children's channels now consist of repeats.

Minister for Digital Margot James said:

Young people in the UK deserve high quality content that entertains, informs and reflects their experiences growing up across the country today.

The UK broadcasting and production sectors are world renowned, and a success story to be proud of. This innovative project is an instrumental part of our support for the UK's vibrant media sector

and will help it continue to go from strength to strength.

In 2016, 98% of children's content on commercial children's channels and 91% on public service broadcasters were repeats. To directly combat this decline in content for younger people in the UK, £57 million will be invested in to a Young Audiences Content Fund, administered by the BFI. This will focus on funding a new influx of creative and distinctive content that represent UK children and teenagers today. Five per cent of the Young Audiences fund will support production companies develop their ideas.

Ben Roberts, Director of Lottery Film Fund, BFI said:

We're excited to be working with Government to deliver the new Young Audiences Content Fund to help support UK companies to create exciting and distinctive new programmes for young people. It goes hand-in-hand with the BFI's own mission to connect audiences with the widest possible range of content. We look forward to making the most of this new opportunity to back talent to create bold and original programming and expand the choices available for young people.

Also announced today as part of the Contestable Fund is a £3m Audio Content Fund which will encourage greater innovation and experimentation in the commercial radio sector.

Currently, examples of public service content (aside from national and local news) on commercial radio are rare due to commercial pressures. By removing the necessity for commercial stations and producers to seek as much sponsorship and advertising revenue, the fund will provide significant support to radio producers to try something different, particularly with new voices who do not have an established relationship with broadcasters and therefore access to funding.

Siobhan Kenny, Chief Executive at Radiocentre, said:

Commercial radio stations are always looking at new ways to serve their listeners, but sometimes the financial reality makes it difficult to do everything they would like. The Audio Content Fund has the potential to provide a significant boost in public service content for audiences, as well as a great opportunity for commercial radio broadcasters to broaden the range of output they provide.

Further guidance, including how to apply to both of the funds, will be published by the fund administrators in the new year. The pilot will then be open for applications in April 2019.

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[Press release: Government launches plan to ban plastic straws, cotton-buds, and stirrers](#)

The Government has today (22 October) set out its plan to ban the distribution and sale of plastic straws, drinks stirrers and cotton buds to protect our rivers and seas.

The plan is subject to a [consultation](#) launched by Environment Secretary Michael Gove.

In England, it is estimated that annually [we use](#) 4.7 billion plastic straws, 316 million plastic stirrers and 1.8 billion plastic-stemmed cotton buds. An [estimated](#) 10% of cotton buds are flushed down toilets and can end up in waterways and oceans.

Even though non-plastic alternatives are readily available, these single-use plastic items are used for just a few minutes but take hundreds of years to break down. Cleaning up the effects of littering costs local Government millions of pounds every year.

In order to eliminate these items from use, the Government intends to introduce a ban on their distribution and sale. The ban would come into force at some point between October 2019 and October 2020, subject to the views collected during consultation.

We recognise there are instances where using plastic straws is necessary for medical reasons and our consultation seeks views on how to ensure those who need straws for medical and accessibility reasons can still use them. For example, pharmacies will still be able to sell plastic straws and restaurants, pubs and bars will be able to stock some straws for use on request. The Government will work closely with stakeholders to ensure these

exemptions are crafted exactly right.

Launching the consultation, Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Our precious oceans and the wildlife within need urgent protection from the devastation throw-away plastic items can cause.

In England we are taking world-leading action with our ban on microbeads, and thanks to the public's support have taken over [15 billion plastic bags](#) out of circulation with our 5p charge.

I commend retailers, bars and restaurants that have already committed to removing plastic straws and stirrers. But we recognise we need to do more. Today we step-up our efforts to turn the tide on plastic pollution and ensure we leave our environment in a better state than we inherited it.

The announcement follows the success of the government's world-leading ban on [microbeads](#) and 5p charge on single-use plastic bags, which has seen distribution by [major supermarkets drop by 86%](#).

Greenpeace UK's political adviser Sam Chetan Welsh said:

Our society's addiction to throwaway plastic is fuelling a global environmental crisis that must be tackled.

Ministers are doing the sensible thing by looking to ban single-use plastic items that can be easily replaced with better alternatives or that we can simply do without. But this should be just the start.

If we are to protect our oceans from the scourge of plastic, the flow of waste needs to be cut off at the tap. And that means the companies producing and selling all this packaging must take responsibility for it and cut down the amount of plastic ending up in our shopping baskets.

Kate Nicholls CEO of UKHospitality said:

We wholeheartedly welcome this consultation on an issue of vital importance and one which hospitality has already taken significant action.

Since UKHospitality's Unpack the Future of Hospitality summit in the spring, thousands of pubs clubs, restaurants and hotels across the UK have changed their straws and stirrers to biodegradables, or adopted policies that cut or eliminate their use in their venues.

The Government is seeking views on how we can cut plastic waste and

we look forward to continued engagement to play a part in achieving that goal.

It is estimated there are over [150 million tonnes of plastic in the world's oceans](#) and every year one million birds and [over 100,000 sea mammals die](#) from eating and getting tangled in plastic waste. A [recent report](#) estimates that plastic in the sea is set to treble by 2025.

Today's move builds on the Prime Minister's recent visit to Kenya, where she announced a further five African Commonwealth Countries (Seychelles, Mauritius, Sierra Leone, Mozambique and the Gambia) have joined the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance, pledging their support to end the scourge of plastics in our oceans. The Alliance, announced in April during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), sees countries across the Commonwealth join forces in the fight against plastic, whether through a ban on microbeads, a commitment to cutting down on single-use plastic bags, or taking other steps to eliminate avoidable single-use plastic.

The UK government has committed [a £61.4 million package of funding](#) to boost global research and help countries across the Commonwealth stop plastic waste from entering the oceans in the first place.

The government is also looking at further ways to reduce avoidable waste and recycle more as part of its Resources and Waste Strategy to be published later this year.

Further information:

- Single-use plastics can be [defined](#) as all products that are made wholly or partly of plastic and are typically intended to be used just once and/or for a short period of time before being disposed of.
- The figure that plastic in the sea is set to treble is taken from the [Future of the Sea](#) report, 2018.
- The [consultation](#) will be open for six weeks.

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