

News story: Evidence gathering to take place on UK plan to resolve RBS' State aid commitment

The European Commission has [formally confirmed](#) that it will begin to gather evidence on the UK Government's plan to resolve RBS's State aid commitment.

The plan, [first announced on 17 February](#), would see RBS fund and deliver a series of initiatives, worth around £750 million, to boost competition in today's UK business banking market by helping small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) access and benefit from greater choice in the banking services available to them.

In parallel, HM Treasury has confirmed that it will carry out a market testing exercise, running for 4 weeks from 17 April. The market testing exercise will ensure that the new package is designed so that it increases competition in the business banking market significantly and works well operationally. As part of the exercise, the Treasury will seek views from parties impacted by the new package, including challenger banks, SME business representatives, and venture capital and fintech firms. Full details of the European Commission's evidence gathering process, including timings of the consultation and further details of the proposed package, will be announced by the European Commission in the coming weeks.

Following the consultation and market testing exercises, the final proposal will be subject to the approval of the College of Commissioners.

News story: South West Water fined for Devon sewage spill

South West Water has been ordered to pay £86,000 in fines and costs for discharging sewage into Dawlish Water over a bank holiday weekend. The case was brought by the Environment Agency.

On 28 August 2015 an automatic alarm was triggered in Brook Street after a blockage in a pipe caused sewage to leak into nearby Dawlish Water, a stream that runs through the centre of the town.

The alarm sounded at 8.15am, but the water company didn't dispatch an emergency crew to deal with the problem until 11.40am. Instead of going to Brook Street, it went to Brook House in another part of Dawlish and reported nothing was wrong. It wasn't until a second team arrived, some 6 hours after

the alarm sounded, that the discharge was discovered and steps were finally taken to stop the pollution.

The problem was caused by a brick which had somehow entered and blocked the sewer causing it to overflow.

This combined sewage overflow pipe was blocked and discharged into Dawlish Water

Dawlish beach was busy with holidaymakers at the time of the incident. Bathers were advised by an official from Teignbridge District Council to stay out of the sea and wash their hands. The Environment Agency declared an 'abnormal situation' and the bathing water was closed for more than 24 hours.

Levels of E.coli bacteria in Dawlish Water increased significantly as a result of the discharge, from 990 per 100ml upstream of the sewer pipe to 4,800,000 at the point of discharge. Further downstream in the walled section by the viaduct the level had reduced to 70,000, however children had been seen playing in the water in this area. Dilution in the sea meant there were safe levels of E.coli in the town's bathing water.

South West Water said it had tried to get a team to Dawlish as soon as possible, but their response time was increased because a crew was unavailable having attended sewer flooding of a property elsewhere overnight. A second crew was unable to attend due to technical problems with their vehicle.

Nigel Thomas-Childs, for the Environment Agency, said:

Water companies must respond promptly to emergencies to minimise any pollution or harm to the environment. This discharge occurred over an August bank holiday when Dawlish was particularly busy. South West Water lost valuable time and took too long to find the blockage and deal with the overflow to the brook.

Appearing before Exeter Crown Court, South West Water Ltd was fined £80,000 and ordered to pay £6,202 costs after pleading guilty to discharging polluting material into Dawlish Brook, an offence under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010.

Press release: New charity investigation: Kids 'N' Cancer UK

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has opened a statutory inquiry into [Kids 'N' Cancer UK, registered](#)

[charity number 1138702](#), and frozen its bank accounts. The inquiry was opened on 15 March 2017.

The charity has objects to provide assistance and financial support to children seeking cancer treatment, and to assist with the overseas costs of Proton Beam Therapy which is not yet available in the UK.

The Commission has established that there are clear and on-going regulatory issues relating to the administration and financial controls of the charity following the arrests of a trustee and an employee of the charity.

The inquiry will examine the:

- charity's governance, particularly since only one trustee remains active
- trustee's management of the charity's financial affairs including its financial controls, fundraising activities associated with specific beneficiaries, the application of funds, and the risk to charity property
- extent to which trustees have properly authorised benefits and remuneration to a trustee and employee at the charity

In order to protect the assets of the charity, the Commission has taken steps to freeze the charity's bank accounts under section 76(3)(d) of the Charities Act 2011.

It remains in contact with the Derbyshire Police and will cooperate with the police investigation as necessary.

The Commission had historic engagement with the charity. In 2014, it identified weaknesses in the charity's administration and issued an action plan to address concerns in areas such as accounting, financial controls and governance.

It was satisfied at the time that the trustees took appropriate action to comply with its plan, but further concerns about the charity's management and financial controls have now arisen.

The Commission stresses that opening an inquiry is not in itself a finding of wrong doing. The purpose of an inquiry to examine issues in detail and investigate and establish the facts so that the regulator can ascertain whether there has been misconduct and mismanagement; establish the extent of the risk to the charity's property, beneficiaries or work; decide what action needs to be taken to resolve the serious concerns, if necessary using its investigative, protective and remedial powers to do so.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were. [Reports of previous inquiries](#) by the Commission are available on GOV.UK.

The charity's details can be viewed on the Commission's [online charity search tool](#).

Notes to editors

1. [The Charity Commission](#) is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
 2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).
 3. Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to institute inquiries. The opening of an inquiry gives the Commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers.
 4. The Commission's decision to announce the opening of a statutory inquiry is based on whether it is in the public interest to do so and with consideration of our objective to increase public trust and confidence in charities.
-

[News story: Prime Minister's visit to Saudi Arabia and Jordan: April 2017](#)

Prime Minister Theresa May visits Jordan and Saudi Arabia from 3 to 5 April to further strengthen the UK's relationships in the Middle East.

Jordan

On her first visit to Jordan as Prime Minister, Theresa May will visit Amman today, 3 April. The Prime Minister will announce a new UK-Jordan initiative to tackle the terror threat and develop new capabilities to strike at the heart of Daesh, with new support for the Jordanian Air Force. She will confirm a plan to improve co-operation on countering violent extremism in the region.

The Prime Minister will also discuss how the UK can build on our co-operation with Jordan to manage the fallout from the Syrian conflict.

Saudi Arabia

The Prime Minister will visit Saudi Arabia Tuesday 4 April and Wednesday 5 April. She will make clear that they are a close and important ally and that we will continue to work closely in a range of areas, particularly on

counter-terrorism where UK-Saudi co-operation is vital.

The Prime Minister is also expected to explore ways of boosting our already very strong trade ties. Saudi Arabia is currently the UK's largest trading partner in the Middle East, with exports of British goods standing at £4.67 billion and services at £1.9 billion in 2015.

Announcements

[News story: Small, local charities set to benefit from fundraising skills training](#)

The Foundation for Social Improvement ([the FSI](#)) has been awarded a grant worth £199,580 to run a two year training programme, helping small, local charities and community groups develop their fundraising skills.

The programme run by the FSI in partnership with [LocalGiving](#), the [Small Charities Coalition](#) and [Charity Finance Group](#), will provide over 5,000 fundraising training opportunities. It will include face-to-face events across the country, webinars and online learning resources, one-to-one advice and consultancy appointments, fundraising campaign planning support, and intensive mentoring matches. Training will be subsidised, helping organisations to take part who may not normally have the resources to attend.

The training will be for small, local charities and community groups with an annual income of up to £1 million, which have a local focus within England.

Minister for Civil Society, Rob Wilson said:

Small, local charities and community groups provide essential support for local people and are the backbone of our communities helping to build a fairer society that benefits everyone, not just the privileged few.

I want to help them be more resilient and sustainable, and this training programme will give them valuable skills so they can continue their vital work helping to support people up and down the country.

Details of the training events will be added to the FSI's website as they

become available, with online resources for those who might not be able to attend the training. You can also follow the [FSI on Twitter](#) for latest news and information about the training.