

[New projects see UK space firms tackle global challenges](#)

Improved disaster response in Commonwealth states and tropical disease control are among the goals of 10 new projects involving British space organisations, Science Minister Sam Gyimah announced.

[News story: Enforcement Undertakings accepted from United Utilities](#)

United Utilities have paid £155,000 to environmental charities as part of two Enforcement Undertakings (EUs). The EUs were offered to the Environment Agency after the company admitted causing sewage to pollute two watercourses in the summer of 2016.

Benefit to environment

EUs are a new kind of restorative enforcement sanction. Polluters can make an offer to the Environment Agency to pay for or carry out environmental improvements as an alternative to any other enforcement action and the Environment Agency decides whether this is acceptable.

In July 2016, a blockage in a sewage detention tank in Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire, caused sewage to overflow to the River Goyt, resulting in discoloration to the river downstream to New Mills, and sewage fungus being deposited on the river bed for at least a kilometre. Although no fish were found to have been killed, there was a short-term but significant impact on invertebrate life and the river habitat, in which fish such as trout and bullhead normally thrive.

In August 2016, a blockage in a sewer in Millbrook, Tameside, caused an overflow through a dislodged hatch cover, resulting in a similar impact on a shorter stretch of Swineshaw Brook which runs to the River Tame.

The EU offers were accepted by the Environment Agency in October 2017 and were completed in January 2018. United Utilities made a total of £155,000 in donations to the Wild Trout Trust, the Ramblers Association and the Healthy Rivers Trust. This money will be used to fund environmental improvements and research in the affected catchments and to restore endangered footpaths.

The company also spent a further £10,000 removing rubbish from Swineshaw Brook and also paid the Environment Agency's incident response and investigation costs in full. In response to both incidents United Utilities

had acted quickly to stop the pollution and resolve the cause. As part of the EUs the company also committed to improving their infrastructure and asset maintenance schedules in order to reduce the likelihood of this happening again.

Mike Higgins, an Environment Officer with the Environment Agency, said:

Enforcement Undertakings allow polluters to positively address and restore the harm caused to the environment and prevent repeat incidents.

They offer quicker and more directly beneficial resolution than a court prosecution and help offenders who are prepared to take responsibility for their actions to voluntarily make things right. We will continue to seek prosecutions against those who cause severe pollution or who act deliberately or recklessly.

Please report any environmental issues to the Environment Agency's 24 hour Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

[Hong Kong Customs seizes suspected smuggled watches \(with photo\)](#)

Hong Kong Customs mounted an anti-smuggling operation yesterday (February 7) and seized 48 suspected smuggled watches with an estimated market value of about \$2 million.

Customs officers intercepted an outgoing private car at Sha Tau Kok Control Point yesterday evening and seized 26 watches on board of the vehicle and on the body of the driver. The 46-year-old male driver was arrested and the private car was detained.

Upon follow-up investigation, Customs officers further seized 22 watches and large amount of watch boxes at a residential unit in Kwun Tong. A 43-year-old woman in the unit was arrested.

Investigation is ongoing.

Smuggling is a serious offence. Under the Import and Export Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing or exporting unmanifested cargo is liable to a maximum fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for seven years.

Members of the public may report any suspected smuggling activities to the Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182.



[Press release: Government announces Mr Justice Langstaff will lead inquiry into the Infected Blood scandal](#)

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, David Lidington, today (8 February) announced that Mr Justice Langstaff will chair the public Inquiry into the infected blood scandal.

Mr Justice Langstaff will be the full time Chair of the Inquiry from 1 May following his retirement from the High Court. In advance of this, he will be consulting further with people affected, their families and other stakeholders on the Inquiry's terms of reference.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, David Lidington said:

The infected blood scandal of the 1970s and 80s is a tragedy that should never have happened. We must now ensure it can never happen again.

I am determined that this independent Inquiry will give victims and their families the answers they have spent decades waiting for.

I want to ensure the Inquiry is now established as quickly as possible. I thank Justice Langstaff for agreeing to lead this important work and Government will provide him with all the support he needs.

Mr Justice Langstaff said:

Providing infected blood and plasma products to patients truly deserves to be called a major scandal. I intend through this Inquiry to be able to provide both some well-needed answers to the victims and their families, and recommend steps to ensure that its like will never happen again.

Nothing less than a thorough examination of the evidence will suffice: and the process needs to lead to a full report within the shortest timescales that such thoroughness can accommodate.

Once the further consultation on the terms of reference has taken place, the Minister for the Cabinet Office will confirm the final terms to the House of Commons.

Co-ordination measures drawn up for visitors to Hong Kong during Chinese New Year Golden Week

The Tourism Commission, in co-operation with relevant government departments, major tourist attractions, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) and the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC), has drawn up related measures to cope with the tourist flow between Hong Kong and the Mainland during Chinese New Year Golden Week (February 15 to 21), a Government spokesman said today (February 8).

Relevant government departments will enhance manpower at all control points and co-ordinate transport and cross-boundary services during Chinese New Year Golden Week.

The Inter-departmental Joint Command Centre set up by the Immigration Department, the Police, the Customs and Excise Department (Customs) and other relevant departments will be activated during the period to monitor the situation at each land control point, as well as to maintain close liaison with the relevant Mainland counterparts and take contingency action where necessary.

In addition, the Tourism Commission will maintain effective communications with the tourism authorities in Guangdong and Shenzhen based on the mechanism for information exchange and emergency handling of Golden Weeks.

“It is expected that passenger traffic from February 15 to 21 will be heavier than usual. To avoid congestion during the morning and evening peak hours at various boundary control points, we urge Mainland visitors and local

residents to cross the boundary at less busy hours," the spokesman said.

To assist visitors in planning their trips, the Immigration Department will upload the daily arrival figures at all control points to its website (www.immd.gov.hk) from February 16 to 22. Such information will also be hyperlinked to the HKTB's website (www.discoverhongkong.com) for visitors' reference.

With the Tourism Commission's co-ordination, major tourist attractions will extend their opening hours as appropriate and formulate crowd control measures and contingency arrangements during Chinese New Year Golden Week. At the same time, the Tourism Commission, in collaboration with the TIC, will appeal to travel agents and restaurants targeting Mainland tour groups to be vigilant in ensuring appropriate measures be taken in the orderly management of tourists and coaches.

As regards visitors' consumer awareness, the Tourism Commission and the HKTB have deployed staff to distribute souvenirs and leaflets printed with messages concerning consumer rights and channels for lodging complaints to Mainland visitors at the Lo Wu Control Point, the Lok Ma Chau Control Point and other popular attractions, so as to enhance their awareness of the protection of their own rights. An advisory note on consumer rights for Mainland group tour visitors has also been uploaded to the websites of the Tourism Commission and relevant local bodies, and published in the Mainland through the China National Tourism Administration.

Meanwhile, to protect group tour visitors' rights, the TIC will enforce a series of regulatory measures on arrangements for receiving inbound Mainland group tours, which includes requiring Hong Kong travel agents to register with the TIC the itineraries of the Mainland inbound tours that they receive together with proof of accommodation within a specified period. The TIC will deploy additional manpower for conducting inspections in districts where many of the registered shops are located, such as Hung Hom and To Kwa Wan, and offer immediate assistance to tourists and tourist guides during Chinese New Year Golden Week. In addition, Customs and the Police will step up inspection of retail shops targeting Mainland tourists, so as to combat acts of unfair trade practices and coerced shopping. Customs, the Police, the TIC and the Consumer Council will also handle visitors' complaints in Hong Kong through a fast-track referral system.

The Tourism Commission has provided the hotlines of the relevant local organisations to inbound tourists via the tourism authorities in Guangdong and Shenzhen. During Chinese New Year Golden Week (from February 15 to 21), in case of emergency, Mainland inbound group tourists, tour escorts and tourist guides can seek assistance directly from the TIC by calling its service hotline 2807 0707 (operating from 9am to midnight). As for enquiries or complaints concerning consumer rights, they can call the HKTB hotline 2508 1234 (operating from 9am to 6pm) or the Consumer Council hotline 2929 2222 (operating from 9am to 5.30pm).