

Press release: UK Government introduces measure to safeguard water supply for England & Wales

Updated: Added translation

- UK and Welsh Governments introduce new water protocol for England and Wales
- Paves the way to remove the Secretary of State powers to intervene on water policy in Wales
- Protocol demonstrates how far we have come from the events of 52 years ago, which resulted in the flooding of the Tryweryn Valley
- Protocol will come into force on 1 April 2018

The UK Government has today laid before Parliament a water protocol for England and Wales which will safeguard water resources, water supply and water quality for consumers on both sides of the border.

Delivered jointly with the Welsh Government, this protocol meets a key commitment made during the passage of the Wales Act 2017 and paves the way for the Secretary of State powers of intervention in relation to water to be repealed.

Under the Government of Wales Act 2006, the Secretary of State currently holds powers to intervene if he believes an Assembly Bill, or the exercise of a devolved function, risks having a serious adverse impact on water resources, water supply or water quality in England.

The protocol replaces these intervention powers with a reciprocal agreement between the UK and Welsh Governments.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

The UK Government is today acting on its commitment to deliver a water protocol so that the interests of water consumers in Wales – and those in England – are protected.

From today onwards, no action or inaction by either the UK or Welsh Governments relating to water resources, water supply or water quality should have serious adverse impacts for consumers on either side of the border.

This protocol demonstrates how far we have come from the events of 52 years ago, which resulted in the flooding of the Tryweryn Valley. Today's agreement puts cross-border arrangements for water on a footing fit for the 21st century and underlines what can be achieved when two governments work together for Wales' future

prosperity.

These are powers which affect the lives of everyone living in Wales and are a major step towards the clearer, stronger and fairer devolution settlement that the UK Government is putting in place for the people of Wales.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Across the UK we have a shared interest in protecting our environment and delivering a Green Brexit.

The new water protocol for England and Wales is an important part of this shared interest and will make sure water resources, supply and quality are safeguarded for consumers on both sides of the border.

We must all continue to work closely together on the environment, fisheries and agriculture as powers are returned from the European Union.

The intervention powers will be repealed when the new reserved powers model of devolution put in place by the Wales Act 2017 comes into effect on 1 April next year.

You can read the protocol [here](#).

Policy paper: Intergovernmental Protocol on Water Resources, Water Supply and Water Quality

The UK Government has laid before Parliament a water protocol for England and Wales which will safeguard water resources, water supply and water quality for consumers on both sides of the border.

Press release: Second phase of assessment on new nuclear reactor for UK begins

The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and the Environment Agency announced today that they are progressing to the next phase of their assessment of a new nuclear reactor design for the UK.

The assessment follows preparatory work by General Nuclear System Ltd (GNS) and the regulators.

The process, known as Generic Design Assessment (GDA), allows the regulators to begin assessing the safety, security and environmental aspects of new reactor designs before site-specific proposals are brought forward.

In addition, GNS will be launching a [comments process](#), which enables anyone to submit comments and questions about the reactor design to the company for their response.

Mike Finnerty, ONR's Deputy Chief Inspector and Director of ONR's New Reactors Division said:

The purpose of GDA is to determine whether the design meets the robust safety and security standards to make it suitable for use in the UK. I am satisfied that there are adequate project management and technical provisions in place to enter Step 2 of the process and, as regulators, we can begin our technical assessment phase.

Steve Hardy, Environment Agency Nuclear Regulation Group Manager said:

In this GDA we're assessing the environmental acceptability of a new reactor design from China, the UK HPR1000. We'll identify any issues or concerns we have with the UK HPR1000 and work with GNS, CGN/EDF's company bringing this reactor to the UK, to make sure it understands our expectations and delivers a design that meets them.

We are beginning a process of robust scrutiny on which we will report our progress and findings. People can contribute to this work through the comments process that can be accessed from our websites.

ENDS

Notes to Editors and contact details

Generic Design Assessment (GDA) is a joint process between the Office for Nuclear Regulation and Environment Agency.

GDA enables the nuclear regulators to assess the safety, security and environmental impacts of any new reactor designs at a generic level, before receiving an application to build a particular nuclear power station design at a specific location.

Due to the complexity and the level of scrutiny required in the GDA process it is expected to take around four years to complete, provided General Nuclear System Ltd meet the timetable for submissions and the submissions are of sufficient detail.

Bradwell Power Generation Company Ltd, a joint subsidiary of China General Nuclear (CGN) and EDF, proposes to construct a new nuclear power station at their site next to the existing Magnox site at Bradwell in Essex

Read more about the GDA process on the joint regulators' [website](#).

Read more about General Nuclear System's UK HPR1000 [website](#).

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[Press release: Waste site operation to protect workers and environment](#)

The Environment Agency has joined forces with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in the North East to carry out combined visits to check waste sites aren't flouting important legislation.

This ongoing multi-agency approach aims to improve working practices on

regulated sites.

The joint initiative, named Operation Hercules, focuses on sites that recycle, process or store waste, from scrap vehicles to general household waste. Operators use a variety of processes and equipment to store, sort and process waste which have the potential to expose workers to risks to health and safety.

The aim of these visits is two-fold; to make sure the sites are operating within the conditions of their Environmental Permit to protect the environment and community, while ensuring the health and safety of workers isn't put at risk.

Carla Metcalf, Waste Specialist for the Environment Agency, said:

We manage our permitted sites every single day to ensure they are operating within the law, to protect the environment and to minimise impact on the local community.

Health and safety is paramount when our officers are visiting sites and officers regularly contact HSE if they feel a site is unsafe.

These joint operations are a really good opportunity to share knowledge with other agencies and mean we look at the site from different perspectives, ensuring any issues impacting on the environment and community can be looked at together with site safety.

Inspector Victoria Wise from the Health and Safety Executive added:

In the last five years 39 workers and 11 members of the public have been killed because of work activity in the sector. The main causes of death are people being run over or struck by a moving vehicle. A high number of workers in this industry are also exposed to processes that cause irreversible ill health conditions.

During the last joint regional initiative HSE found all eight sites visited to be in significant contravention of health and safety law. HSE and the Environment Agency have therefore agreed to run the initiative again throughout this region in November.

Joint operations such as this mean we can work alongside the Environment Agency to make sure those responsible for the sites are not exposing workers, members of the public and the environment to harm from the operations they undertake.

During the last series of joint visits at the back end of 2016, HSE and the Environment Agency attended eight sites across the region.