

Press release: MHRA reclassifies Viagra Connect tablets to a Pharmacy medicine

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has today announced Viagra Connect (containing sildenafil 50mg) will be [formally classified](#) from a prescription only medicine (POM) to a pharmacy medicine (P). This means it could be available without prescription for use by men over 18 who have erectile dysfunction.

This decision was made following a reassuring assessment of the safety of the Viagra Connect, advice from the Commission on Human Medicines, and a public consultation earlier this year with positive outcome.

If marketed, the medicine will be sold from pharmacies following a discussion with the pharmacist. Pharmacists will be able to determine whether treatment is appropriate for the patient and can give advice on erectile dysfunction, usage of the medicine, potential side effects, and if further consultation with a general practitioner is required.

Viagra Connect will not be sold to those with severe cardiovascular disorders; at high cardiovascular risk; liver failure; severe kidney failure; or taking certain interacting medicines. Use of Viagra Connect in these groups of men must continue to be under the supervision of a doctor.

Making this medication more widely available will help direct men who might not otherwise seek help into the healthcare system and away from the risks that come with buying medicines from websites operating illegally.

Erectile dysfunction medicines are a popular target for criminals selling unlicensed and counterfeit medicines. Over the past 5 years, investigators from MHRA have seized more than £50 million of unlicensed and counterfeit erectile dysfunction medicines.

Mick Foy, MHRA's Group Manager in Vigilance and Risk Management of Medicines, said:

This decision is good news for men's health. The move to make Viagra Connect more widely accessible will encourage men to seek help within the healthcare system and increase awareness of erectile dysfunction.

Erectile dysfunction can be a debilitating condition, so it's important men feel they have fast access to quality and legitimate care, and do not feel they need to turn to counterfeit online supplies which could have potentially serious side effects.

Press release: People of Mytholmroyd can vote on design of flood wall

People living in Mytholmroyd are being urged to vote on which wall finish they would prefer as part of the new £30m flood alleviation scheme in their village.

Information leaflets about the consultation on the section of wall between Caldene Avenue Bridge and Whitehouses are being delivered to around 2,000 households along with a token they can use to choose which of 2 design options they prefer.

Sample panels of the 2 stone wall finishes have been built by stone masons for residents to view in the carpark outside Mytholmroyd community centre.

Boxes will be placed at the local post office and community centre in the village for people to post their token to indicate their choice.

The 2 alternative finishes were put together following discussions with a landscape group, made up of local residents and interested parties, helping to shape the scheme.

Helen Batt, Environment Agency director for the flood schemes in the Calderdale area, said:

Our project team has worked closely with the landscape stakeholder group and architects to come up with these two designs following feedback that residents would prefer us to use natural, traditional materials which are in keeping with the local environment. We thought it would be good to let the whole village choose between the two options and have a say on the final design.

The consultation will run from Monday 4 December to Sunday 10 December. Three drop-in sessions are being held at Mytholmroyd community centre during the consultation for residents to talk to the project team. The sessions are planned for Monday 4, Wednesday 6 and Thursday 7 December, between 3pm and 8pm.

The final decision will be submitted as part of the planning application for area F of the scheme which stretches from Caldene Bridge to Hawksclough Bridge.

The Environment Agency provides free warning of the risk of flooding from rivers. Sign up for this service, find out if your home is at risk and keep up to date with the latest situation by visiting www.gov.uk/flood or call Floodline on 0345 9881188.

Press release: Overseas Territories Joint Ministerial Council: 28 November 2017

The Prime Minister welcomed leaders from 10 British Overseas Territories to Downing Street for the start of their annual Joint Ministerial Council meeting. She opened by setting out the Government's desire to cement the enduring partnership that exists between the UK and the Overseas Territories, and the UK's ambition to support their diverse economies and natural heritage.

The PM reiterated the UK's commitment to long-term reconstruction efforts following the devastating consequences of Hurricanes Irma and Maria, and invited Territory leaders of the islands worst affected – including Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands and Turks and Caicos – to speak of their experiences. As part of the UK's continued efforts, the Prime Minister confirmed a new £70 million package of recovery and reconstruction support, supplemented by up to £300 million of UK loan guarantees for territories that need support to access finance. The leaders welcomed the financial commitment, and reiterated their appreciation for the UK's rapid response that offered support within hours of the disaster.

The Prime Minister took the opportunity to update the leaders on the progress of our discussions with the European Union, and invited leaders to express their views so they could be properly reflected in our strategy for Brexit negotiations.

She also raised the issue of financial services, noting the increased focus on taxation and transparency that have come to the fore since the recently leaked Paradise Papers. The PM recognised that a lot of work had been done following the Panama Papers last year. She thanked the Territories for the leadership they have already shown, including steps they have already taken to implement international standards, and asked for similar leadership to show what more can be done to make further progress on the issue.

Press release: Prestigious award for Highways England's 'Road to Growth'

Highways England's plan setting out how the country's motorways and major A

roads will unlock economic growth and support development for decades to come has been recognised by a leading independent professional body of economists.

The Institute of Economic Development (IED) hailed the company's strategic economic growth plan, "The Road to Growth" as "greatest economic impact" at their 2017 annual awards.

The plan includes Highways England's Innovation, and Growth and Housing Funds.

Highways England's Executive Director of Strategy and Planning, Elliot Shaw, said:

It is a great achievement to have been recognised by the Institute of Economic Development for our innovative approach to unlocking economic growth. While we continue to successfully deliver the Government's Road Investment Strategy, we are actively looking ahead to 2020 and beyond. It is this strategic and innovative thinking that is showing the difference we are making.

Highways England's Senior Strategic Implementation Manager Alice Darley receiving the award

Announcing the award Bev Hurley, Chair, Institute of Economic Development, said:

We would like to congratulate Highways England as the first winner of our Greatest Economic Impact award. The Road to Growth is the first strategic economic growth plan for Highways England and draws upon extensive research, consumer and stakeholder feedback. It is closely aligned with the Government and Department of Transport's vision for a high performing road infrastructure that positively impacts the economy, employment and housing markets.

Highways England has made 'supporting economic growth' one of its five strategic priorities and at the same time has set funding aside for innovation, some strategic projects that could unlock growth and produced a planning guide setting out how to work with the organisation. Whilst the overall approach may not yet be fully measurable, it was considered clear from the documents submitted that this shift to concentrate on economic growth can make a considerable difference to the economic growth of locations across England.

The Road to Growth and details of Highways England's Growth and Housing Fund can be [found on our web page.](#)

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Couple ordered to pay over £62,000 for River Leadon pollution](#)

The Bennions of Rosehill Farm, Dymock, were each fined £5,500 and each ordered to pay £25,798 in costs along with a victim surcharge of £170.

More than 15,200 fish were killed as a result of the incident in which hundreds of tonnes of digestate were discharged into the river. Fish killed including brown trout, chub, eel, dace, roach, lamprey, and bream. The Bennions are the sole partners of the partnership that own and run Rose Hill Farm.

The incident, on the 22 July 2016, occurred when an employee was instructed by Mark Bennion to fertilise one of the orchards. The employee turned on the irrigation system designed to take the digestate fertiliser from a lagoon to the orchard.

However, he had not physically checked and therefore did not know that the valve linked to the standpipe in another field was partly open. As a result, when the fertiliser entered the irrigation system, it discharged out of the standpipe, across the field and into the Preston Brook.

The discharge pump operates at 100 tonnes an hour, therefore a very large amount of polluting digestate entered the watercourse. The discharge was the worst in 10 years in the area.

Mark Bennion liaised with Environment Agency officers and submitted a proposal for dredging the brook in order to remove all contaminates. This was completed on 12 August 2016.

Surveys conducted after the incident show the fish population within the watercourse have been significantly adversely impacted. The Leadon is an important habitat for eels and a significant number of adults were lost as a result of the pollution.

In passing sentence, the Magistrates sought to achieve a balance between the major adverse impact on the watercourse and the powerful mitigation put forward on the defendants' behalf. The Bennions were both previously of good character, with no previous convictions, and co-operated with the Environment Agency immediately after the incident. Their remorse was evident throughout the investigation and court hearing. Since the incident the Environment Agency have restocked the river with more than 15,000 fish. The restocking process will continue over the next 4 years.

Speaking after the case an Environment Agency spokesperson said:

Agriculture uses 70% of the land in England and farmers have a major impact on the environment. Most farmers act responsibly and we work with the industry to respond to incidents, tackle the root causes of pollution and promote good practice.

But where farmers are responsible for serious pollution incidents, we will not hesitate to take enforcement action, including prosecution. Agriculture is the single biggest source of serious pollution incidents and all farmers have a duty to prevent it.

This was one of the worst pollution incidents on a watercourse in the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire area in the last 10 years. It significantly affected a stretch of the River Leadon catchment.

We are pleased that the court has accepted the seriousness of the case and imposed appropriate penalties.

We appreciate reports from the public to the Environment Agency's Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60 which allows our staff to respond swiftly to protect people, wildlife and the environment – and also to investigate environmental offences which may have occurred.