

Press release: Regulator pleased with charities' engagement with consultation on next annual return

The Charity Commission says it is pleased with the engagement it has had with charities as part of its [consultation on the Annual Return for 2018](#).

The regulator has to date received 192 responses to the consultation, which concludes on Friday (24th), and has engaged with a further 70 charities as part of targeted user testing of the new system.

This saw the Commission identifying groups of charities most likely to be affected by proposed changes and proactively seeking their help in testing the new digital system that supports the Annual Return. The testing was conducted by individuals who will be responsible for completing the annual return on behalf of their charities.

The Commission says that this testing is a vital way of assessing the practical impact of new questions, including to what extent they represent an additional regulatory burden.

The regulator also held round-table discussions with groups of charities likely to be affected by proposed changes, such as charities with links overseas.

The Commission is yet to conduct a full analysis of consultation responses, but says that early indications are that the feedback is largely positive, with some users pointing to practical issues in responding to proposed new question areas.

David Holdsworth, Registrar of Charities for England and Wales and Deputy Chief Executive at the Charity Commission, says:

Over the past 12 weeks, we have, for the first time, combined modern digital user testing with more traditional consultation methods to achieve better quality engagement than ever before in an Annual Return consultation.

The user testing has enabled those who would complete any future return to test how easy it is to complete and to notify us of any practical issues that they encountered.

As a result of this approach, we have received an extensive range of constructive feedback and responses about our proposed changes

to the annual return and the digital service that supports it. I'm very pleased with this level of engagement and the information we've gathered during the consultation gives us a sound evidence base as we develop the annual return for 2018.

We're already beginning to analyse the responses and will take on board the feedback we receive. I encourage charities that have not yet had their say on the new annual return questions to do so before the consultation comes to a close this Friday

The regulator says it will publish a full analysis of consultation responses before the end of February 2018; it expects to make the new Annual Return available during the first half of 2018.

All charities with annual incomes of over £10,000 are required to complete an Annual Return, and the regulator has been consulting on a new, more dynamic system for 2018, which will be more targeted and easier to use for charities. As part of the new system, smaller charities and those with simpler operations will be required to answer fewer questions. The Commission has also proposed new question areas.

Ends

[News story: Avian influenza \(bird flu\) in winter 2017 to 2018](#)

Avian influenza (bird flu) is a disease of birds. The UK is currently free from bird flu, but there is a constant risk the disease may arrive and all poultry keepers should review their biosecurity, sign up for disease alerts and register their birds with APHA. Keepers are reminded that they must report any unexplained deaths or sickness to their vet.

Current situation

The H5N8 strain of bird flu is currently circulating in Europe, with recent cases in poultry and wild birds in Italy, wild birds in Germany and poultry in Bulgaria.

The current risk of incursion in the UK is medium for wild birds and low for poultry, although this depends on levels of biosecurity on individual premises. This is because the wild bird migration season is well under way, bringing birds from areas where we know bird flu is present to the UK for the winter.

Read more about the current situation in the latest [veterinary outbreak assessment](#).

What to do if you keep poultry and captive birds

If you keep poultry – whether that's a few birds in your garden or a large commercial flock – you should take steps now to review your biosecurity, register your birds with APHA, sign up for [disease alerts](#) and report any sick birds.

Review your biosecurity

Bird flu is spread by direct contact between birds and through contamination in the environment, for example in bird droppings. This means wild birds carrying the disease can infect domestic poultry, so the best way to reduce the risk of your poultry catching bird flu is to minimise chances for them to come into contact with wild birds or their droppings by practising good biosecurity.

You should review your biosecurity measures now, as the risk level may increase in the coming weeks. This means reading government guidance on good biosecurity and taking action to:

- Minimise movement in and out of your bird enclosure.
- Clean footwear before and after visiting your birds.
- Keep bird enclosures clean and tidy and regularly disinfecting any hard surfaces.
- Humanely control rats and mice.
- Place birds' food and water in fully-enclosed areas that wild birds cannot access, and remove any spilled feed.
- Keep your birds separate from wildlife and wild waterfowl by putting suitable fencing around the outdoor areas they access.
- Make sure equipment, feed and bedding are stored undercover so they cannot be contaminated by wild birds.
- Where possible keep chickens and turkeys separate from ducks and geese.

Read and download our [advice poster for keepers of poultry](#) (PDF, 1 page).

Register your birds

All keepers are encouraged to register their birds with Defra so we can contact you quickly if there is a disease outbreak in your area and you need to take action. If you have more than 50 birds, you are legally required to register your flock within one month of their arrival at your premises. [Find out how to register your birds](#).

Report signs of disease

If you suspect disease in your own flock, or you find dead wild birds such as wild ducks, wild geese, swans, gulls or birds of prey, you must let Defra know. Call the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77.

Sign up for disease alerts

By signing up to the [free disease alert system](#) you will get text alerts and emails informing you of the latest news about bird flu and Newcastle disease outbreaks in Great Britain.

Further information

Recent announcements on avian influenza

[Press release: Harron Homes fined £120,000 over construction pollution](#)

A Leeds-based house building company has been fined £120,000 for illegally polluting a watercourse from a Huddersfield construction site.

Harron Homes Limited was sentenced yesterday (20 November) at Leeds Magistrates' Court after admitting one charge of causing illegal discharges from its Farriers Croft estate in 2015.

The Environment Agency prosecuted the firm after investigating reports of contaminated run-off which was entering a tributary of Grimescar Dyke.

Rosalind Emsley-Smith, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told the court that an officer visited the site on 20 November 2015 and saw polluted water flowing out of the entrance of the construction site. The company was also pumping silt contaminated water from site excavations which also entered the watercourse.

Following the Environment Agency's visit, Harron Homes attempted to control the silt run-off by setting up settlement tanks. However, further incidents of pollution were reported in November and December 2015 and subsequent inspections revealed that this system was inadequate. Silty water was found to be discharging, resulting in further pollution.

Samples taken from the discharges showed that they were having a significant impact on the water quality in the watercourse up to three kilometres further downstream. Some samples showed there to be nearly 35,000 milligrams of suspended solids per litre of water, whereas a healthy watercourse is expected to have a concentration lower than 30 milligrams per litre.

The firm's attempt to contain the muddy water was inadequate; silt was seen flowing off the site

Mark West, environment management team leader at the Environment Agency,

said:

These pollution incidents had a significant impact on the water environment over a number of weeks, and were entirely avoidable. In West Yorkshire there has been a worrying increase in the number of pollutions incidents reported to us that on investigation are attributable to the construction sector.

Construction companies should consider the potential environmental impact of developments they undertake at the initial planning stage and must adhere to environmental permitting rules and invest in appropriate management systems to prevent their activities from affecting the local environment.

If anyone spots pollution of this kind, they are urged to contact the Environment Agency's incident hotline on 0800 807060 so we can investigate.

In mitigation, Harron Homes told the court that it had now put procedures in place to prevent future pollution incidents.

In addition to the fine, the company was ordered to pay £8,706.71 in legal costs and a £120 victim surcharge.

Press release: October 2017

Transaction Data

This data provides information about the number and types of applications that HM Land Registry completed in October 2017.

In October:

- HM Land Registry completed more than 1,740,000 applications to change or query the Land Register
- the South East topped the table of regional applications with 407,148

The transaction data shows HM Land Registry completed 1,740,068 applications in October compared with 1,586,987 in September and 1,532,007 last October, of which:

- 408,685 were applications to update existing titles compared with 363,990 in September
- 823,267 were applications to obtain an official copy of a register compared with 747,090 in September
- 226,488 were official searches compared with 210,805 in September
- 26,260 were postal applications from non-account holders, compared with 24,136 in September

Applications by region and country

Region and country	August 2017 applications	September 2017 applications	October 2017 applications
South East	392,737	372,168	407,148
Greater London	313,338	298,966	329,865
North West	186,030	176,591	195,045
South West	164,325	155,495	168,802
West Midlands	143,074	135,283	145,121
Yorkshire and the Humber	128,718	122,127	135,347
East Midlands	115,673	111,411	120,689
North	76,810	72,506	82,710
Wales	79,289	76,292	80,938
East Anglia	71,789	66,034	74,202
Isles of Scilly	47	47	106
England and Wales (not assigned)	87	67	95
Total	1,671,917	1,586,987	1,740,068

Top 5 local authority areas

Top 5 local authority areas	August applications	Top 5 local authority areas	September applications	Top 5 local authority areas	October applications
Birmingham	25,179	Birmingham	23,631	Birmingham	26,232
City of Westminster	21,516	City of Westminster	20,892	City of Westminster	24,087
Leeds	19,102	Leeds	18,076	Leeds	19,895
Manchester	17,499	Cornwall	16,809	Manchester	17,810
Cornwall	17,193	Manchester	16,290	Cornwall	17,794

Top 5 customers

Top 5 customers	August applications	Top 5 customers	September applications	Top 5 customers	October applications
Enact	37,513	Enact	39,349	Enact	48,058
O'Neill Patient	26,888	O'Neill Patient	24,273	O'Neill Patient	24,610
Optima Legal Service	21,031	Optima Legal Service	20,688	Optima Legal Service	23,721
Eversheds LLP	20,189	Eversheds LLP	18,307	HBOS Bank PLC	20,980
HBOS Bank PLC	18,235	Barclays Bank PLC	16,491	Eversheds LLP	19,123

[Access the full dataset](#) on data.gov.uk.

Notes to editors

1. Transaction Data is published on the 15th working day of each month. The November Transaction Data will be published at 11am on Thursday 21 December 2017 at [HM Land Registry Monthly Property Transaction Data](#).
2. The monthly Transaction Data showing how many applications for new titles, leases, splitting titles, updating existing titles, official copies of the register and searches were completed, reflects the volume of applications lodged by customers using an HM Land Registry account number on their application form.
3. Completed applications in England and Wales shown by region and by local authority include postal applications as well as those sent electronically.
4. Transaction Data excludes pending applications, withdrawn applications, bankruptcy applications, bulk applications and discharge applications.
5. Transactions for value are applications lodged involving a transfer of ownership for value. Discharge applications remove a charge, for example a mortgage, from the register. For an explanation of other terms used, see [abbreviations used in the transaction data](#).
6. Most searches carried out by a solicitor or conveyancer are to protect the purchase and/or mortgage. For example, a search will give the buyer priority for an application to HM Land Registry to register the purchase of the property. This can give an indication of market activity.
7. Reasonable skill and care is used in the provision of the data. We strive to ensure that the data is as accurate as possible but cannot guarantee that it is free from error. We cannot guarantee our data is fit for your intended purpose or use.
8. Transaction Data is available free of charge for use and re-use under the [Open Government Licence](#) (OGL). The licence allows public bodies to make their data available for re-use.
9. If you use or publish the Transaction Data, you must add the following attribution statement: "Contains HM Land Registry data © Crown copyright and database right 2017. This data is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0".
10. HM Land Registry's mission is to guarantee and protect property rights

in England and Wales.

11. HM Land Registry is a government department created in 1862. It operates as an executive agency and a trading fund and its running costs are covered by the fees paid by the users of its services. Its ambition is to become the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data.
12. HM Land Registry safeguards land and property ownership worth more than £4 trillion, including more than £1 trillion of mortgages. The Land Register contains more than 24 million titles, which show evidence of ownership, covering more than 84% of the land mass.
13. For further information about HM Land Registry visit www.gov.uk/land-registry
14. Follow us on:

Contact

[Press release: No escape from illegal worker fine for Coventry clothing company director](#)

Mr Dewitt gave a disqualification undertaking to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy for six years which is effective from 27 November 2017.

Mr Dewitt was the director of Mystique Coventry Ltd, a company trading as a clothing wholesaler, and on 15 November 2016 Home Office Immigration Enforcement Officers discovered that they were employing seven workers who were not eligible to work in the UK.

The company went into liquidation on 16 March 2017 owing £74,394 to creditors, including the £70,000 penalty imposed by the Home Office Immigration and Enforcement for employing illegal workers.

Martin Gitner, Deputy Head of Investigations with the Insolvency Service said:

Illegal workers are not protected under employment law, and as well as cheating legitimate job seekers out of employment opportunities these employers defraud the tax payer and undercut honest competitors.

The Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, makes employers

responsible for preventing illegal workers in the UK. To comply with the law, a company must check and be able to prove documents have been checked prior to recruitment that show a person is entitled to work.

The public has a right to expect that those who break the law will face the consequences and this should serve as a warning to other directors tempted to take on illegal staff.

Mr Ajay Dewitt, date of birth June 1988 and he resides in Bedworth, Coventry.

Mystique Coventry Limited, company number 10000072 was incorporated on 11 February 2016.

Mr Dewitt was a director from 11 February 2016 to liquidation. The Company went into Creditors Voluntary Liquidation on 16 March 2017 with an estimated deficiency of £68,125.

On 06 November 2017, the Secretary of State accepted a Disqualification Undertaking from Mr Dewitt, effective from 27 November, for a period of 6 years.

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings. Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

The Insolvency Service, an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), administers the insolvency regime, and aims to deliver and promote a range of investigation and enforcement activities both civil and criminal in nature, to support fair and open markets. We do this by effectively enforcing the statutory company and insolvency regimes, maintaining public confidence in those regimes and reducing the harm caused to victims of fraudulent activity and to the business community, including dealing with the disqualification of directors in corporate failures.

BEIS' mission is to build a dynamic and competitive UK economy that works for all, in particular by creating the conditions for business success and promoting an open global economy. The Criminal Investigations and Prosecutions team contributes to this aim by taking action to deter fraud and to regulate the market. They investigate and prosecute a range of offences, primarily relating to personal or company insolvencies.

The agency also authorises and regulates the insolvency profession, assesses and pays statutory entitlement to redundancy payments when an employer cannot or will not pay employees, provides banking and investment services for bankruptcy and liquidation estate funds and advises ministers and other government departments on insolvency law and practice.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 7596 6187

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on: