

Press release: New environmental protections to deliver a Green Brexit

Plans to consult on a new, independent body that would hold Government to account for upholding environmental standards in England after we leave the European Union have been set out by Environment Secretary Michael Gove today.

Leaving the EU gives us the opportunity to put the environment at the heart of policy making, while ensuring vital protections for our landscapes, wildlife and natural assets are not only maintained but enhanced.

To help deliver a Green Brexit, ministers will consult on a new independent, statutory body to advise and challenge government and potentially other public bodies on environmental legislation – stepping in when needed to hold these bodies to account and enforce standards.

A consultation on the specific powers and scope of the new body will be launched early next year.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said today:

We will deliver a Green Brexit, where environmental standards are not only maintained but enhanced.

Today we are setting out our plans to ensure the powerful are held to account. We will consult on creating an independent body – encouraging transparency and preventing careless or irresponsible behaviour damaging our natural environment.

We will consult as widely as possible on these proposals to ensure we get this important decision right for future generations.

Currently environmental decisions made in the UK – from improving air and water quality to protecting endangered species – are overseen by the European Commission, which monitors targets, scrutinises new legislation and takes action against illegal behaviour.

This current system is underpinned by a number of ‘environmental principles’, such as sustainable development and the polluter pays principle, which puts the onus on polluting individuals or businesses to pay to repair damage.

Although these principles are already central to government environmental policy, they are not set out in one place besides the EU treaties. The proposed consultation on the statutory body will therefore also explore the scope and content of a new policy statement to ensure environmental principles underpin policy making.

One of the key questions, which we will explore with the devolved

administrations (DAs), is whether Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland wish to take a different or similar approach. We want to hear from as many people and organisations as possible right across the UK – from business, NGOs, the farming sector, civil society, and elsewhere.

[Press release: CCTV to be introduced in all slaughterhouses in England in 2018](#)

CCTV recording will become mandatory in all slaughterhouses in England next year, [Environment Secretary Michael Gove has today confirmed](#).

Defra will take the plans forward following an extremely positive reaction from the industry, welfare groups and the public.

In August, the Secretary of State [launched a consultation](#) on the plans to deliver a manifesto commitment for CCTV to be required in every slaughterhouse in England in all areas where live animals are present, with unrestricted access to footage for Official Veterinarians – reassuring consumers that high welfare standards are being effectively enforced.

Legislation will be introduced in the New Year, coming into force in the Spring. All slaughterhouses will be required to comply following an adjustment period of up to six months.

A summary of responses published today (Sunday) shows that of almost 4,000 respondents, more than 99% were supportive of the plans.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

We have some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world and want to cement our status as a global leader by continuing to raise the bar.

The reaction to this consultation highlights the strength of feeling among the public that all animals should be treated with the utmost respect at all stages of life and be subject to the highest possible welfare standards.

These strong measures also provide a further demonstration to consumers around the world that as we leave the EU we continue to produce our food to the very highest standards.

Having carefully considered all of the responses, the Government agrees with

the overwhelming proportion of respondents that were in favour of mandatory CCTV to protect animal welfare in slaughterhouses. The proposals will also give the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) Official Veterinarians (OVs) unfettered access to the last 90 days of footage to help them monitor and enforce animal welfare standards.

The FSA has strict processes in place for the approval of slaughterhouses, and specially trained vets carry out checks to make sure the welfare of animals is protected throughout their time in the slaughterhouse. If breaches are found, a slaughterhouse can be given a welfare enforcement notice, have its staff's licences suspended or revoked, or be referred for a criminal investigation.

The RSPCA's Head of Public Affairs David Bowles said:

This is a very welcome and crucial step towards introducing higher welfare right across the food chain.

We applaud the Secretary of State for his steadfast and focused commitment to ensuring the highest possible animal welfare standards in the UK once we have left the EU.

The RSPCA looks forward to seeing the details of the proposal as issues such as where the cameras will be located, footage quality and storage, and who can have access to it are essential to making the legislation meaningful.

British Veterinary Association Senior Vice President Gudrun Ravetz said:

The mandatory installation of CCTV is a vital tool to ensure high standards of animal health, welfare and food safety in all slaughterhouses.

Official Veterinarians carry out an essential role in slaughterhouses by independently assessing and reporting breaches of animal welfare, and unrestricted access to CCTV footage will allow them to carry out this role even more effectively.

We have been campaigning for these measures for a number of years and it is reassuring to see such a high level of support for their implementation from industry and the public.

Heather Hancock, Chairman of the Food Standards Agency, said:

The Secretary of State's decision to require CCTV in all slaughterhouses is a welcome step towards ensuring that animal welfare and hygiene standards are met across the meat industry.

Last year, the FSA Board concluded that, without mandatory CCTV in

slaughterhouses, we would see minimal further progress in businesses improving animal welfare or complying with official controls to protect public health.

We look forward to working with the industry as CCTV plans are implemented, and to seeing public confidence rise as a result.

The government will now further discuss the details of bringing in the proposals and present draft legislation to Parliament as soon as Parliamentary time allows.

1. Read the [‘Mandatory Closed Circuit Television \(CCTV\) recording in slaughterhouses: Summary of responses and Government response’](#).
2. For more information on this press release, contact the Defra press office on 020 8225 7318.

Press release: Ministers for the UK Government in Wales to mark Remembrance Day

Ministers for the UK Government in Wales will each take the opportunity to reflect upon the sacrifices and dedication of our service men and women, past and present, at Remembrance Day events in Wales this morning (12 November).

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will attend a service in Barry having attended the opening of the Field of Remembrance in Cardiff earlier this week. Guto Bebb will attend a service at St Grwst’s Church in Llanrwst in his constituency.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

At this time of remembrance, we pay tribute to the generations of service men and women who lost their lives serving our country, and defending our freedom. The people of Wales will always honour, with respect and appreciation, the memory of those who made the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf.

Earlier this year, I had the honour of travelling to Belgium to join thousands of descendants of First World War soldiers for the centenary commemorations for the Battle of Passchendaele. I was

struck by the enormous loss of the Welsh soldiers who played a pivotal role in the bloodiest of battlefields.

Today, as we bow our heads in silence, we will remember those that paid the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom that we all enjoy today and those members of the Armed Forces who are currently away from loved ones, defending our values, our democracy and our nation.

UK Government Minister Guto Bebb said:

Today, thousands of people across Wales will wear their poppies with pride, and gather at war memorials to mark the sacrifices made by our service men and women around the world.

The debt of gratitude that we owe to those serving today, and to those who never came home, is immeasurable and today we say thank you. We will remember them.

Later this month, the Secretary of State will deliver a speech at the Armed Forces in Wales awards on 30 November, an event which celebrates high achievers who have provided the most outstanding contributions to defence in 2017.

[News story: Communities to decide how to spend shale cash windfall](#)

Local communities across the country will choose how they spend up to £1 billion of additional funding on local projects, under proposals [unveiled today](#) (11 November 2017).

The Treasury's Exchequer Secretary, Andrew Jones has announced that people living near sites, approved for the safe and clean extraction of shale gas, will benefit from a share of the proceeds through a new 'Shale Wealth Fund'.

Those living in the North and the Midlands – where there are significant shale gas reserves – are set to benefit first.

The fund, which will provide up to £10 million for each local community, will empower local decision making. Communities will be able to decide how to spend the money locally, but projects could include:

- new play parks, community sports facilities and libraries
- improvements to transport links
- restoration of local heritage sites

The development of a British shale gas industry is set to bring substantial and far-reaching benefits. Not only will safe and sustainable exploration of shale boost the UK economy, create close to 65,000 new jobs and attract up to £33 billion in investment*, but it could also generate greater energy security.

The UK currently imports nearly half of its gas from abroad, and by 2030 this is set to rise to three quarters. Using UK supplies of shale gas will reduce the need for this, making Britain more self-sufficient.

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Andrew Jones, MP, said:

Shale production could play an important part in the UK's future energy security, creating jobs and boosting our economy.

The economic benefits must be shared with those living alongside these sites and this funding will ensure local people reap the rewards too.

Further information

Following consultation, the government has developed a clear set of principles that will be at the heart of the development of the Shale Wealth Fund.

These are:

- a commitment to real local decision-making, by allowing local communities to determine how the Shale Wealth Fund is spent in their area. This includes the potential for household level payments
- prioritising the needs of local people first and foremost. Where local communities decide that they wish to spend some funding on regional projects, this should benefit communities hosting shale sites in those regions, and be subject to a clear instruction from communities
- providing additional benefits to local communities, in addition to existing local government funding, and not as a replacement for existing local spending
- ensuring that decision-making is locally representative and those who make these decisions are held accountable to local communities. The process will be fully transparent

The government has confirmed that it will be up to communities to decide where the money should go. This could include being paid directly to local residents in host areas.

The fund will initially consist of up to 10% of tax revenues arising from shale gas production, to be used for the benefit of communities which host shale sites.

The government's [response to its consultation](#) on the development of a Shale Wealth Fund was published today (11 November).

More details on how communities will receive the money will be published in due course.

*EY, Getting Ready for UK Shale Gas, April 2014

Press release: PM calls with leaders of the DUP and Sinn Fein parties: 10 November 2017

The Prime Minister has spoken on the phone to the leadership of the DUP and Sinn Fein parties about the political situation in Northern Ireland.

In separate phone calls, she expressed her concern that despite recent progress agreement had not yet been reached and she urged both parties to bridge the gaps on the outstanding issues that remained.

On Northern Ireland's finances, the Prime Minister explained how the UK Government will reluctantly be taking forward legislation for a Budget Bill on Monday, to ensure that in the absence of an Executive, public services in Northern Ireland have the resources they need to operate.

The Prime Minister made clear this was absolutely not an indication of direct rule but it was necessary to enable the Northern Ireland Civil Service to allocate funds for key public services while talks between the parties continued.

There was agreement on the importance of devolved Government being returned to Northern Ireland for the benefit of all communities and the Prime Minister said that the UK Government would continue to work, alongside the Irish Government, with the parties in reaching a successful outcome.