

Press release: Car hire sites investigated over hidden charges

The sites are being investigated due to concerns they are breaking consumer law by hitting customers with hidden charges and unexpected fees, such as for fuel, or late night pick-ups and drop-offs.

Over the last year the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has been working with car hire comparison sites to ensure their customers get clear and accurate prices.

As a result of this, there has been a significant improvement in the accuracy and clarity of information on car rental price comparison websites and, today, standards are much higher across much of the sector. For example, most comparison websites now clearly flag young driver surcharges and one-way fees in the prices they quote.

However, a small number of businesses have been identified which may have still not made adequate improvements.

This has resulted in the launch of 2 enforcement cases and prompted the CMA to publish advice to the sector on how to comply with consumer law, issuing letters to 40 companies, asking them to maintain standards and, where necessary, make improvements to comply with the law.

The advice makes clear the CMA's expectations, such as:

- including all extra charges in the price they first give their customers;
- clearly setting out fuel pricing policies to customers; and
- warning them about high excess or deposits amounts.

Today's announcement builds on the CMA's work with the European Commission into 'the big 5' car rental firms in 2015, which resulted in savings of an estimated £100 million for UK customers.

It also follows the CMA's year-long in-depth examination of online comparison tools, which set out clear ground rules for all sites. They should be:

- Clear on key issues such as how they make their money;
- Accurate in the information they provide;
- Responsible about how they use people's personal data; and
- Easy to use.

James MacBeth, Project Director, said:

For many people hiring a car is an essential component to days out, holidays and trips. No one should be misled or face unexpected charges, whether they choose to book directly with the car hire

company or through a comparison site.

While we have seen improvements in the way car hire comparison sites quote prices, we are still concerned that some companies may not have faced up to their legal obligations, and as a result we have opened 2 enforcement cases.

We expect this sector to provide clearer information about the true costs, and to explain upfront what customers will actually pay. Businesses must read our advice and make the necessary changes. If companies break the law they risk enforcement action, as these cases show.

People thinking about renting a car overseas should look at [our advice](#) and the [Citizens Advice top tips](#) to help you avoid being caught out when renting a car.

Notes to editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For CMA updates, follow us on Twitter [@CMAgovuk](#), [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#) and [LinkedIn](#).
 2. The key pieces of consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA's investigation are the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs) and Part 2 of the Consumer Rights Act 2015. The CPRs contain a general prohibition against unfair commercial practices and specific prohibitions against misleading actions, misleading omissions and aggressive commercial practices. Part 2 of the Consumer Rights Act aims to protect consumers against unfair contract terms and notices, and requires contract terms to be fair and transparent.
 3. The CMA has not reached a final view on whether the practices it is concerned about breach consumer protection law, and will listen to the companies' responses to its concerns. If necessary the CMA will take action through the courts to enforce that law under Part 8 of the Enterprise Act 2002. Ultimately, only a court can rule that a particular term or practice infringes the law.
 4. The CMA will continue to take steps to encourage and maintain compliance with consumer law in this sector. This will include conducting a review in early 2018 with further enforcement cases if necessary. It is also gathering evidence on complaints about problems that people have experienced overseas (in particular those relating to charges for damage) in order to build on the work we have already done with overseas regulators to tackle problems experienced abroad.
 5. Media enquiries to the CMA should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or 020 3738 6798.
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[News story: Norovirus: all you need to know to prepare](#)

Norovirus is an unpleasant vomiting bug that usually lasts about 2 days. There's not much that can be done to treat it but there are ways to reduce the risk of passing it on to those around you.

It is highly contagious and so it's important to practise good hygiene by thoroughly washing hands with soap and warm water, staying away from places like hospitals and care homes and avoiding preparing food or having close contact with others when ill to limit the spread of norovirus, which causes unpleasant, but short lived, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Nick Phin, National Infection Service Deputy Director, PHE said:

Norovirus can be unpleasant and is easily passed on to those around you. Most people get over it within a day or 2 but, in the very young, elderly or those who have weakened immune systems, it can last longer and it is easy to get dehydrated, so it is important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent this.

It is transmitted by touching hands or surfaces that the virus has landed on. All surfaces should be thoroughly disinfected after any episode of illness.

Those who have diarrhoea and vomiting should not prepare food until 48 hours after symptoms have disappeared. We advise that they should avoid visiting GP surgeries, care homes and hospitals if they have symptoms. If anyone has symptoms and is concerned they should contact NHS 111 or talk to their GP by phone.

One of the best ways to protect against norovirus and to help prevent infection is by practising good hygiene. This includes thorough hand washing with soap and warm water especially after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food.

Symptoms of norovirus include sudden onset of nausea, projectile vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain. Illness typically lasts about 24 to 48 hours.

[News story: PM's open letter to EU](#)

citizens in the UK

As I travel to Brussels today, I know that many people will be looking to us – the leaders of the 28 nations in the European Union – to demonstrate we are putting people first.

I have been clear throughout this process that citizens' rights are my first priority. And I know my fellow leaders have the same objective: to safeguard the rights of EU nationals living in the UK and UK nationals living in the EU. I want to give reassurance that this issue remains a priority, that we are united on the key principles, and that the focus over the weeks to come will be delivering an agreement that works for people here in the UK, and people in the EU.

When we started this process, some accused us of treating EU nationals as bargaining chips. Nothing could have been further from the truth. EU citizens who have made their lives in the UK have made a huge contribution to our country. And we want them and their families to stay. I couldn't be clearer: EU citizens living lawfully in the UK today will be able to stay.

But this agreement will not only provide certainty about residence, but also healthcare, pensions and other benefits. It will mean that EU citizens who have paid into the UK system – and UK nationals into the system of an EU27 country – can benefit from what they've put in. It will enable families who have built their lives together in the EU and UK to stay together. And it will provide guarantees that the rights of those UK nationals currently living in the EU, and EU citizens currently living in the UK, will not diverge over time.

What that leaves us with is a small number of important points to finalise. That is to be expected at this point in negotiations. We are in touching distance of agreement. I know both sides will consider each other's proposals for finalising the agreement with an open mind. And with flexibility and creativity on both sides, I am confident that we can conclude discussions on citizens' rights in the coming weeks.

I know there is real anxiety about how the agreement will be implemented. People are concerned that the process will be complicated and bureaucratic, and will put up hurdles that are difficult to overcome. I want to provide reassurance here too.

We are developing a streamlined digital process for those applying for settled status in the UK in the future. This process will be designed with users in mind, and we will engage with them every step of the way. We will keep the cost as low as possible – no more than the cost of a UK passport. The criteria applied will be simple, transparent and strictly in accordance with the Withdrawal Agreement. People applying will not have to account for every trip they have taken in and out of the UK and will no longer have to demonstrate Comprehensive Sickness Insurance as they currently have to under EU rules. And importantly, for any EU citizen who holds Permanent Residence

under the old scheme, there will be a simple process put in place to swap their current status for UK settled status.

To keep development of the system on track, the government is also setting up a User Group that will include representatives of EU citizens in the UK, and digital, technical and legal experts. This group will meet regularly, ensuring the process is transparent and responds properly to users' needs. And we recognise that British nationals living in the EU27 will be similarly concerned about potential changes to processes after the UK leaves the EU. We have repeatedly flagged these issues during the negotiations. And we are keen to work closely with EU member states to ensure their processes are equally streamlined.

We want people to stay and we want families to stay together. We hugely value the contributions that EU nationals make to the economic, social and cultural fabric of the UK. And I know that member states value equally UK nationals living in their communities. I hope that these reassurances, alongside those made by both the UK and the European Commission last week, will provide further helpful certainty to the four million people who were understandably anxious about what Brexit would mean for their futures.

Press release: UK & Taiwan Share Experience on Renewable Energy and Green Finance

A UK trade and technology mission visits Taiwan on 18-20 October to share the UK's experience in the renewable energy sector, focussing particularly on offshore wind. With the largest ever number of the UK renewable energy delegates to Taiwan, this mission is part of the British Office's "Innovation is GREAT" campaign, which will introduce innovative British technologies and services to Taiwan.

Made up of 50 representatives from 30 UK companies, the mission comprises two separate delegations: * an offshore wind mission led by Mr Huub den Rooijen, Director of Energy, Minerals & Infrastructure of The Crown Estate, in Taiwan to share the UK's experiences of developing and managing the world's largest offshore wind market; and * a Green Finance Mission, including representatives from the City of London Corporation, the London Stock Exchange, the Green Investment Group and other leading UK green finance institutions, here to share UK experiences of promoting investment in clean energy technology and discuss regulatory and policy tools that can help the development of Taiwan's green finance sector.

Both groups participated in the 12th "UK-Taiwan Renewable Energy Conference" today (19 October), sharing their extensive expertise on the renewable energy

sector. The Conference was held in collaboration with the Bureau of Energy, Ministry of Economic Affairs and covered a wide range of topics, including cross government working, marine engineering, training, green financing and operation & maintenance.

Catherine Nettleton, Representative of the British Office, said in her opening remarks: "Renewable energy is a remarkable economic driver for the UK. Our experience tells us that it can be very challenging to start a new industry, but it will be exciting to see Taiwan starting its first offshore wind farm in the foreseeable future. This mission from the UK is our largest ever, including a range of experts in the field. I'm pleased that Britain is a strong partner for Taiwan in its efforts to develop offshore wind."

A memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ChangHua County and UK Aon Taiwan Ltd was signed at the Conference today, representing the strong collaboration between the UK and Taiwan to successfully develop offshore wind in Taiwan. During its 2-day visit, the delegation will visit ChangHua County to learn more about the region's commitment to green energy development and the environment.

British firm ODE Ltd also officially launched its Taiwan Office at today's event, and has already begun recruiting skilled Taiwanese engineers.

The Green Finance delegation took part in a UK Taiwan Green Finance Roundtable with the Financial Supervisory Commission on Wednesday 18 October where policy makers and representatives of the financial services industry discussed how to accelerate investment into renewable energy. Sherry Madera, Asia Adviser, City Of London Corporation also delivered a presentation entitled "UK Green Finance Initiative: Turning Ambition into Action" in an event co-organised by the European Chamber of Commerce, the British Chamber of Commerce and the British Office Taipei.

On Thursday 12 October, the UK launched its [Clean Growth Strategy](#) to build on the success to date in delivering emissions reductions while growing the economy; UK emissions have fallen by 42% since 1990 while the economy has grown by 67%. The Clean Growth strategy announced by UK's Department for Business, Energy, Industrial strategy provides NTD23.5 billion of fund for less established technologies, such as offshore wind, with the next one planned for spring 2019.

The UK was the first country in the world to adopt statutory emission reduction targets, which require the Government to reduce emissions by 80% of the 1990 level by 2050 (Climate Change Act 2008). As part of the green industry, the UK has taken a 3.7% share of the global market for green goods and services. This puts the UK in sixth place globally.

The UK is already the world leader in offshore wind, with 6.5GW of capacity operating today, the largest in the world with continuous emphasis on technological innovation. The UK is expecting a total of 10GW to be installed by 2020, by which point offshore wind will supply between 8 and 10 percent of the UK's electricity annually. Renewable energy is a remarkable economic driver in the UK, more than 1 million jobs have so far been created in

renewable energy and the total industry is worth £117 billion. The UK is also one of the world's most attractive countries to invest in renewable energy projects.

More information:

UK supply – the UK has developed the largest offshore wind market in the world and has strengths that complement the Taiwan market. Where there is a need for products and services that are unique to this industry the UK has solutions. There are three key areas where UK support can work:

- **Expertise:** Taiwan is in a similar position as the was UK 15 years ago, and we have experts that can support this new market and deliver projects on time and efficiently. The key areas for cooperation are early stage development, design, engineering, installation support and O&M. When London Array started installing wind turbines in 2011 it was taking some 60 days to install and commission each turbine. Last month, it took 14hrs to install and commission a wind turbine on Dudgeon.
- **Specialist equipment:** the industry has evolved now to a mature state and prices are driving down, a key influencer has been the development of dedicated equipment, and the UK has some of the best manufacturers in the world. These include manufacturing cables, cable protection, specialist vessel equipment, turbines blades, substation electrical equipment and substations.
- **Marine operations:** to build and maintain these huge offshore wind farms, the UK has developed a world leading fleet of installation vessels and operations and maintenance vessels. Along with this we have world leading companies to support in coordinating vessel operations and monitor the efficiency and safety of everyone working offshore.

Complementing Taiwan: there is a need for local content in the Taiwanese market; and an appetite to develop a home supply chain. The UK's approach is to encourage partnership with local companies who have the potential to deliver in the market. The key areas for local content can be in major or secondary fabrication for foundations and towers, vessels for installation support, technicians (having learned from UK counterparts), installation port services and operations and maintenance.

[Press release: Low pay and progression](#)

in the labour market

Low pay is endemic in the UK and there has been little progress in the number of people managing to escape from poorly paid jobs, a new report by the Social Mobility Commission reveals today (Thursday 19 October).

The 'Great Escape?' report, carried out by the Resolution Foundation, explores trends in low pay over recent decades and examines the factors linked to low pay and progression. It tracks individuals' pay over 10 years and divides them into 3 groups:

- 'stuck' – those who are stuck in low pay every year
- 'cyclers' – those who move out of low pay at some point, but who have not consistently stayed above the low pay threshold by the end of the decade
- 'escapers' – those who earn above the low pay threshold in each of the last 3 years, suggesting they have remained in higher pay

The analysis finds that just 1 in 6 low-paid workers (17%) managed to permanently escape from low pay in the last decade. Meanwhile, a quarter of low-paid workers remained permanently stuck in low pay and nearly half (48%) fluctuated in and out of low pay over the course of the last 10 years.

The report finds that women are more likely to be low paid than men and are also far more likely to get stuck in low pay. It is particularly difficult for women in their early twenties to escape low pay, with the lack of good-quality, flexible work to fit alongside childcare responsibilities as the most likely barrier.

However, there has been some long-term progress for women. Excluding those who exit the data over the following decade, the proportion of women getting stuck has fallen from 48% in 1981 to 91 to 30% in 2006 to 2016. In contrast, the risk of long-term low pay has increased for men over the same period (from 20% to 25%). This is likely due to the increasing number of men working in low-paid, part-time work.

The report finds that nearly two-thirds (64%) of workers who are 'stuck' in low pay are working part time, while nearly three-quarters (71%) of people who escaped low pay were working full time.

Getting stuck in low pay carries a severe pay penalty. On average, people stuck in the low pay trap have seen their hourly wages rise by just 40p in real terms over the last decade, compared to a £4.83 pay rise for those who have permanently escaped.

Age is also identified as a factor, with older workers far less likely to escape low pay than their younger counterparts. The report finds that 23% of low-paid workers aged 25 or under escaped low pay over the following decade, compared to 15% of those aged 46 to 55.

The research also finds that in the last decade, low-paid workers were mostly

likely to escape in Scotland and least likely to escape in the North East.

It adds that while the National Living Wage is reducing the number of people in low-paid work – last year saw the biggest fall in 40 years – there will still be around 4 million low-paid workers in 2020, highlighting the scale of Britain's low pay challenge.

The Rt Hon Alan Milburn, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, said:

Britain has an endemic low pay problem. While record numbers of people are in employment, too many jobs are low skilled and low paid. Millions of workers – particularly women – are being trapped in low pay with little chance of escape. The consequences for social mobility are dire.

Britain's flexible workforce gives us global economic advantage, but a 2-tier labour market is now exacting too high a social price. A new approach is needed to break the vicious cycle where low skills lead to low pay in low-quality jobs. Welfare policy should focus on moving people from low pay to living pay. Government should join forces with employers in a new national effort to improve progression and productivity at work. Without concerted action, Britain will become more socially divided and social mobility will continue to stall.

Conor D'Arcy, Senior Policy Analyst at the Resolution Foundation, said:

Britain has one of the highest proportions of low-paid work in the developed world. And while three-quarters of low-paid workers did manage to move into higher paying roles at some point over the past decade, the vast majority couldn't sustain that progress. This lack of pay progress can have a huge scarring effect on people's lifetime living standards.

The National Living Wage is playing a massive role in reducing low pay, but it can't solve the problem alone. Employers need to improve career routes for staff, while government should support them with a welfare system that encourages progression at work.

1. The Social Mobility Commission is an advisory, non-departmental public body established under the Life Chances Act 2010, as modified by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. It has a duty to assess progress in improving social mobility in the United Kingdom and to promote social mobility in England. It currently consists of 4 commissioners and is supported by a small secretariat.

2. The commission board currently comprises:
 - Alan Milburn (chair)
 - Baroness Gillian Shephard (deputy chair)
 - Paul Gregg, Professor of Economic and Social Policy, University of Bath
 - David Johnston, Chief Executive of the Social Mobility Foundation
3. The functions of the commission include:
 - monitoring progress on improving social mobility
 - providing published advice to ministers on matters relating to social mobility
 - undertaking social mobility advocacy
4. Low pay is defined as hourly earnings below two-thirds of the median hourly wage, excluding tips, commissions or other payments. The low pay threshold is estimated to be £8.25 per hour in 2017.
5. The report draws on data and analysis from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, the New Earnings Survey Panel Dataset and Understanding Society.