

News story: Self-service approach reduces fees for some low-risk licences

The MMO has introduced an automated process for obtaining permission to carry out activities which are a low risk to the marine environment. Applicants are now able to self-assess their proposals against specific criteria using a new assistance tool. Where projects qualify they can complete an online form and instantly get a licence for their activity.

The new self-service scheme, which covers six categories of activity, has also enabled the MMO to reduce the associated cost for such applications from £175 to £50.

Some of the activities which may qualify for the new scheme are:

- Burial at sea
- Maintenance of existing structures and assets
- Minor removals
- Non-navigational clearance dredging
- Beach maintenance activities
- Deposit of markers

Continued improvement of marine licensing processes

Where people or organisations want to undertake activities in the marine area they may need prior permission (a 'marine licence') from the Marine Management Organisation under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009. Such activities [may include construction, dredging, deposits or removal.](#)

The MMO is continuing to enhance the marine licensing process to ensure that it is as efficient as possible, maximises value for money and proportionately manages risks to the marine environment.

It launched a fast-track scheme for some marine licence applications in 2013, which it extended in 2014. The MMO has carried out a further review of this process and the activities eligible for it. It has identified that a number of activities covered by the scheme were sufficiently consistent in nature and extent that they could be considered low risk to the marine environment and be suitable for self-service.

Proportionate approach to regulation

The MMO is able to lower the fee for such licences by removing the need for manual consideration by its case officers. Instead it has carried out risk-assessment work for the relevant activities in advance. As a result applicants who meet self-service criteria will be provided with a licence

containing pre-determined standard conditions relevant to the activity selected.

The MMO is supporting applicants to assess their circumstances against self-service criteria by adding a function to its free online Geographical Information System (GIS). This tool helps applicants to understand any sensitivity associated with the location of their proposed activity and determine whether the self-service criterion is met.

More information about and guidance on the activities eligible for self-service processing is available in the [marine licensing section](#).

News story: Transport investment boost to apprenticeships and skills

Up to 35,000 apprenticeship opportunities are set to be created over the next 5 years thanks to major investment in road and rail infrastructure and technology, a report published today (12 July 2017) has revealed.

In the past year the road and rail sector has delivered more than 2,000 new apprenticeships – and it's expected this number could rise to between 5,000 and 8,000 every year to 2022. Large-scale projects such as HS2 and a focus on new technology and cyber security is set to increase demand for transport skills – in particular in civil engineering, traffic management and digital technology. The proposed expansion of Heathrow could also bring opportunities for an extra 10,000 apprentices across the country.

The [industry report charts the progress of the government's transport investment skills strategy](#), highlighting how the government and transport bodies, including Network Rail and Highways England are rising to the challenge of meeting demand, including:

- better quality apprenticeships, leading to highly skilled jobs, including working with Investors in People on quality standards for employers
- supporting people already working in transport to gain new skills, as well as returners to the industry and those looking for a career change
- investment in jobs and skills written into contracts and rail franchise agreements
- driving greater diversity in the industry
- identifying exactly where and when different jobs and skills will be needed
- working with schools to encourage routes into transport careers

Transport minister John Hayes welcomed the report:

Making our transport infrastructure the best in the world will build business and change lives for the better. Just as putting apprenticeships at the heart of this investment will seed opportunities for thousands of people. This government is taking the big transport decisions for Britain's future like HS2 and Heathrow, delivering the biggest investment in roads and rail for a generation and equipping individuals and businesses with the skills they need to make all this happen. Better journeys creating jobs, driving investment, nurturing the common good and serving the national interest.

Nichola Wright, a signalling technician and former apprentice for Network Rail, said:

Being an apprentice meant I could gain qualifications and learn my craft out on the track, all while earning a wage. I sing the praises of apprenticeships to everyone I meet, as it has given me opportunities beyond what I could have imagined and the chance of an incredible career.

Keeta Rowlands is a marine operations apprentice in Southampton.

Every day is different for me whether it is trying to communicate through language barriers, or organising ships through gaps in huge yacht races. The maritime industry isn't just driving ships. There are so many roles, opportunities and challenges.

Chair of the Strategic Transport Apprenticeship Taskforce and Commissioner at Transport for London, Mike Brown, said:

The transport sector is delivering on its promise to address the skills challenges we are facing. Skilled apprentices are vital for the future of business and it is right that the transport sector should be leading work across government.

The [Strategic Transport Apprenticeship Taskforce was set up in April 2016](#) to deliver the commitments made in the government's transport investment skills strategy. Members include the Department for Transport, Network Rail, the Rail Delivery Group, Highways England, Transport for London, Heathrow, HS2 Ltd and the Trades Union Congress.

Press release: Foreign Secretary shows UK support for the Western Balkans at Summit in Italy

The Foreign Secretary will join forces with the UK's allies to continue to help the Western Balkans reform, stabilise and prosper, as he attends a European summit in Trieste, Italy.

Boris Johnson will represent the Prime Minister at the 2017 Western Balkans Summit, where he will urge the region and its friends to step up efforts towards developing the Balkans into a "beacon of democracy and economic growth".

This year, the UK will invest over £20m to help improve the rule of law, supporting authorities to crack down on illegal drugs and human trafficking. It will also help the implementation of much needed reforms designed to improve the region's business environment and tackle corruption.

Today's Summit will launch a new Regional Economic Area Action Plan to boost job creation, generate new investments in transport and energy infrastructure as well as digital projects to improve connectivity in the region.

During the Summit, the Foreign Secretary will also confirm that the UK will host the 2018 Western Balkans Summit.

Ahead of the talks, the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

"We want to see the Western Balkans as a stable, secure and prosperous region, succeeding in Europe. The UK is unfailingly committed to working together with our friends and allies to make the Western Balkans a beacon of democracy and economic growth.

"I'm proud that the UK will host the Western Balkans Summit in 2018. This is a firm demonstration of our support for much-needed reform to improve the region's security, boost the economy, and to combat challenges such as illegal drugs and human trafficking, which pose a threat to all of us whether in the Western Balkans or the UK."

This is the fourth Summit in a series that forms the Berlin Process which was initiated by German Chancellor Merkel to boost regional and intra-regional cooperation with the Western Balkans.

This Summit will bring together the Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers and Economy Ministers from the six Western Balkans countries. EU institutions along with Germany, Austria, France, Slovenia, Croatia and Italy will also attend.

News story: CNC officer cycles from Land's End to John O'Groats for Alex's Journey

Insp Andrew Potter will cycle from Land's End to John O'Groats over 12 days to support Alex Goodwin, a 10-year-old boy suffering from Ewing Sarcoma – a rare bone cancer that affects children.

Efforts to raise money to send Alex to America for treatment have been ongoing for months, led by Alex's father Jeff Goodwin, who is a former Civil Nuclear Constabulary (CNC) sergeant and is now a serving officer with Warwickshire Police. Hundreds of thousands of pounds have been raised to allow Alex to receive ground-breaking surgery and specialist radiation therapy in America. He should return home in August, but the fundraising efforts will continue to allow his treatment to continue.

Andrew has been training hard and will begin his epic journey on Thursday 3 August. He said: "Having worked closely with Jeff and remained a close friend, I have been inspired by his ongoing determination to get Alex the treatment he needs.

"As a result, Alex has already received life-saving treatment in America, having his femur replaced with a telescopic prosthesis which will lengthen as his body grows, and has successfully undergone radiotherapy.

"Alex will need significant aftercare over the coming years and beyond and by completing this challenge, I hope to raise at least £1,000 to fund specialist physiotherapy to help him with his recovery."

As well as Andrew's 950 mile journey, other fundraising efforts include the release of a book written by Alex and his father about his experiences, the selling of charity wristbands, and the release of the single 'Horizon on my mind', which was supported by emergency services from across the country.

Andrew continued: "The thought of cycling nearly 1,000 miles is daunting, but it's nothing compared to what Alex has been through and continues to face with such courage. He is such a brave and upbeat little boy and I hope to raise as much money as possible to support him on his journey."

Jeff Goodwin, Alex's father, said: "I am so grateful to Andrew for doing this fundraiser and pleased that the CNC and its officers as part of the thin blue line have continued to support Alexander's Journey."

To sponsor Andrew, please visit his [Crowdfunding page](#). To find out more about Alex's Journey, [please visit his website](#).

Press release: Tesco/Booker merger referred for in-depth investigation

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) [opened its phase 1 investigation into the merger](#) in May. At the end of June, the companies [requested a 'fast track' referral](#) to the next stage of the investigation.

The CMA believes that in more than 350 local areas where there is currently an overlap between Tesco shops and Booker-supplied 'symbol' stores, shoppers could face worse terms when buying their groceries.

There are concerns that, after the merger, there is potential for Booker to reduce the wholesale services or terms it offers the 'symbol' stores it currently supplies, in order to drive customers to their local Tesco.

Other concerns were raised and considered in the CMA's phase 1 investigation but the CMA has not found it necessary to conclude on all of these concerns given the 'fast track' referral.

The investigation will now pass to a new set of decision makers – an inquiry group chosen from the CMA's independent panel members.

This group will assess whether the deal could reduce competition by conducting further research and analysis as well as seeking views and evidence from all those potentially affected by the merger.

The statutory timetable for the in-depth phase 2 investigation is 24 weeks, which means the final report will be published before Christmas – following an earlier provisional findings report.

The CMA's referral decision will be published shortly on the [case page](#) along with all other information relating to the investigation.

Notes for editors

1. A 'symbol' store is an independent grocery retailer, operating under the Premier, Londis, Budgens or Family Shopper brands, supplied by the grocery wholesaler Booker.
2. Tesco operates more than 3,000 stores across the UK. Booker supplies services to over 5,000 'symbol' stores.

3. 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](#).
4. Under the Enterprise Act 2002 (the Act) the CMA has a duty to make a reference to phase 2 if the CMA believes that it is or may be the case that a relevant merger situation has been created, or arrangements are in progress or in contemplation which, if carried into effect, will result in the creation of a relevant merger situation; and the creation of that situation has resulted, or may be expected to result, in a substantial lessening of competition within any market or markets in the United Kingdom for goods or services.
5. For a case to be fast-tracked to phase 2, the CMA must have evidence in its possession that it believes objectively justifies a belief that the test for reference is met and the notifying parties must have requested and given consent for use of the procedure. In addition to considering whether the case meets those criteria, the CMA will in deciding whether to utilise the fast track process have regard to its administrative resources and the efficient conduct of the case.
6. Under the Act a relevant merger situation is created if 2 or more enterprises have ceased to be distinct enterprises; and the value of the turnover in the United Kingdom of the enterprise being taken over exceeds £70 million ('the turnover test') or as a result of the transaction, in relation to the supply of goods or services of any description, a 25% share of supply in the United Kingdom (or a substantial part thereof) is created or enhanced ('the share of supply test').
7. All the CMA's functions in phase 2 merger inquiries are performed by inquiry groups chosen from the CMA's independent panel members. The appointed inquiry group is the decision-maker on phase 2 inquiries. The CMA's panel members come from a variety of backgrounds, including economics, law, accountancy and/or business. The membership of an inquiry group usually reflects a mix of expertise and experience (including industry experience).
8. Media enquiries to the CMA should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or 020 3738 6798.