

News story: CMA sets out priorities for year ahead

Over the past 12 months the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has brought several major pieces of work to successful conclusion, including a market study into [legal services](#) and its 2 market investigations into the [energy](#) and [retail banking](#) markets.

In its fourth year, as set out in its [annual plan](#), the CMA will build on its progress to date, intervening in markets where necessary to ensure people, including the hardest-pressed in society, are offered the best possible deals when buying goods and services.

The CMA enters 2017/18 with a substantial portfolio of ongoing work. It is pushing ahead with studies into sectors that have long been central to many people's lives (like [care homes](#)), alongside growing and evolving areas of the economy ([digital comparison tools](#)) as well as investigating concerns that consumers' rights are being ignored ([online gambling](#)).

The CMA has already sharply stepped up its enforcement against anti-competitive practices. It opened 10 new civil competition enforcement cases in the past year – more than twice its annual target – imposed [multi-million pound fines](#) on pharmaceutical companies charging the NHS excessive prices for vital medication and secured the UK regime's first [Company Director disqualification](#) for a competition law breach. In the coming year, the CMA commits to further increasing the pace, scale and impact of its enforcement, without sacrificing hard-won improvements to rigour and fairness.

Alongside enforcement, the CMA will continue to use communications tools to raise awareness of the law, minimise the burden of complying (especially for smaller firms) and encourage complaints when firms see unfair practice by others.

The CMA will also continue to operate an efficient and effective mergers regime, building on the improvements already made to the efficiency of its end-to-end processes. It will also continue to conduct regulatory appeals with rigour and independence as required, to ensure an efficient and stable regulatory regime which encourages long-term investment in the UK economy and is ultimately beneficial for consumers.

The CMA is committed to supporting growth in the UK economy. There is a [body of evidence](#) that competition, and competition policy interventions, boost productivity and in 2017/18, the CMA will continue to help tackle the UK's long-standing productivity problem by supporting conditions that enable innovative businesses that treat their customers well to emerge and succeed.

The CMA remains an expert advocate and a strong voice for competition, including in its role as a trusted adviser with policymakers and regulators in the UK and internationally. As the UK prepares to leave the European Union

in 2019 and as the government forms its new economic strategies, this role will be more crucial than ever.

The CMA is prioritising further improving its effectiveness and its efficiency. It aims to do so by using all its resources – physical, financial and intellectual – as efficiently as possible and by learning from its experiences to date. This includes, in relation to market investigations and following a thorough internal review the CMA is [currently consulting](#) on, proposed changes to the way it carries out these complex projects.

David Currie, CMA Chairman, said:

“Our primary duty is to promote competition for the benefit of consumers, and in the year ahead we will continue to protect them from anti-competitive practices, from harmful unfair trading practices and where markets are not working for them, right across the UK.

“Wider developments will have a bearing on our work this year, notably the UK’s planned exit from the EU and new government economic strategies. In the period ahead we intend to remain a strong voice for competition and consumers, working as a trusted adviser to government.

[Press release: Statement from the Secretary of State for Wales in response to Snowdonia helicopter crash](#)

Alun Cairns: Thoughts and deepest sympathies go out to the families of the victims

Snowdonia helicopter crash: Statement from the Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns

My thoughts and deepest sympathies go out to the families of the victims of the helicopter crash in Snowdonia.

I have today spoken to the Acting Chief Constable of North Wales Police to offer the UK Government in Wales’ full support to the investigation.

The emergency services and the mountain rescue involved in the search, rescue and recovery operation have carried out their work in incredibly difficult conditions. I am grateful to them for their determination and dedication, and to those providing support to the families during what is a very difficult time.

The recovery operation will be challenging. I ask that the investigating

authorities be given the time and space necessary to undertake this important work.

Press release: Regulators give design acceptance to the AP1000® power station design

The AP1000® nuclear reactor, designed by Westinghouse, is suitable for construction in the UK said the regulators today following completion of [an in-depth assessment of the reactor design](#).

The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW), the regulators who undertake the Generic Design Assessment of new reactor designs, are satisfied that the reactor meets expectations on safety, security and environmental protection at this stage of the regulatory process.

ONR has issued a Design Acceptance Certificate (DAC) to Westinghouse and the environment agencies have issued a Statement of Design Acceptability (SoDA).

Dr Richard Savage, ONR's Chief Nuclear Inspector, said:

The closure of our assessment of the generic design of the AP1000® reactor is a significant step in the process, ensuring the design meets the very high standards of safety we expect.

We will now focus our regulatory attention on site specific assessments, and NuGen's application for a nuclear site licence.

Dr Jo Nettleton, Deputy Director for Radioactive Substances and Installations Regulation at the Environment Agency, said:

Successfully completing GDA means that the AP1000 is capable of meeting the high standards of environment protection and waste management that we require.

We're already working with NuGen, as it develops its proposals to build and operate three AP1000 reactors at Moorside in Cumbria, to ensure that those high standards are delivered.

The regulators required 51 GDA Issues to be resolved before confirming the suitability of the AP1000. All of the issues have been addressed to the

regulators' satisfaction enabling the DAC and SoDA to be issued. The regulators' assessment reports are all available [online](#)

ENDS

Notes for Editors

1. The Office for Nuclear Regulation is the nuclear safety and security regulator for the UK.
2. The [Environment Agency](#) and Natural Resources Wales are the environmental regulators of nuclear sites in England and Wales respectively.
3. More information on Generic Design Assessment on the joint regulators' website <http://www.onr.org.uk/new-reactors/index.htm>
4. All assessment reports, decision documents and a copy of the Design Acceptance confirmation (DAC) and Statement of Design Acceptability (SoDA) are available online ONR <http://www.onr.org.uk/new-reactors/ap1000/reports.htm> Environment Agency <http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gda-decisions-and-soda-ap1000-nuclear-power-station-design-by-westinghouse-electric-company>
5. The DAC and SoDA are valid for a period of ten years from issue and can be extended subject to review and agreement of the regulators.
6. The issuing of a DAC/SoDA does not mean the construction of the reactor can start. Before a new nuclear power station can be built, the operator (NuGen in this case) must obtain a number of site specific permissions from the regulators and Government, including a nuclear site licence and relevant consents, environmental permits and planning permission (Development Consent Order).
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-operators-of-new-nuclear-power-stations>
7. The Statement of Design Acceptability (SoDA) is being issued jointly by the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales. GDA applies to both England and Wales.
8. For more information, please contact the ONR press office on onr@onr.gov.uk or 020 3028 0505.
9. For the Environment Agency media team contact newsdesk@environment-agency.gov.uk or 020 3025 5623

Press release: New section of A590 opens after Lindal 'dip' work

Highways England is thanking local people and drivers in Cumbria for their patience and support after a new section of the A590 was opened following a £1 million engineering project to tackle flooding.

Drivers started using the brand new section of the road at Lindal near Ulverston shortly after 5am this morning (Tuesday 28 March) as the 4 month project nears its completion at the end of the week.

Lindal 'Dip' before and after photographs

Key elements of the construction work have included moving the carriageway 7 metres north west of the previous alignment and raising it by up to almost 2 metres in places – removing the so-called Lindal 'dip' and solving the flooding issue which in bad weather often required temporary traffic lights to manage traffic past the rain water.

Highways England project manager Peter Gee said:

Lindal Dip is no more. The completion of this work means we can keep the road fully open during bad weather, giving drivers safer and more reliable journeys. We know a lot of people will share our satisfaction in completing this long-awaited project and we'd like to thank local people and drivers for their patience with the road works over the last few months.

The flooding was caused by a combination of factors including the carriageway dip and water from several sources, including the local road network, collecting on the A590.

As well as building a brand new 100 metre raised and realigned section of road with eastbound and westbound carriageways, an innovative 'infiltration' system has also been constructed – using a 1.2 metre diameter drainage pipe to help store rain water before slowly releasing it away.

Some overnight finishing work, requiring temporary traffic lights, will be done over the next 4 nights before the road works will be completely removed.

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.

Speech: David Davis' Commons statement on the Great Repeal Bill White Paper

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement about today's publication of a [White Paper](#) on the Great Repeal Bill.

Yesterday we took the historic step of notifying the European Council of the Government's decision to invoke Article 50; the United Kingdom is leaving the European Union.

That notification marks the beginning of our 2 year negotiation period with the EU. And it reflects the result of last year's instruction from the people of the United Kingdom.

As the Prime Minister said yesterday, it is our fierce determination to get the right deal for every single person. Now is the time to come together to ensure that the UK as a whole is prepared for the challenges and opportunities presented by our exit from the EU.

We have been clear that we want a smooth and orderly exit – and the Great Repeal Bill is integral to that approach. It will provide clarity and certainty for businesses, workers and consumers across the United Kingdom on the day we leave the EU.

It will mean that as we exit the EU and seek a new, deep and special partnership with the European Union, we will be doing so from a position where we have the same standards and rules.

But it will also ensure we deliver on our promise to end the supremacy of European Union law in the UK as we exit. Our laws will then be made in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast – and interpreted not by judges in Luxembourg, but by judges across the United Kingdom.

Some have been concerned that Parliament will not play enough of a role in shaping the future of the country once we have left the European Union.

Today's White Paper shows just how wrong that is.

This publication makes clear there will be a series of Bills to debate and vote on, both before and after we leave, as well as many statutory instruments to consider.

White Paper summary

Let me turn to the content of today's White Paper, Mr Speaker. The paper we have published today sets out the three principal elements of this Great Repeal Bill.

First, it will repeal the European Communities Act and return power to the United Kingdom.

Second, the Bill will convert EU law into United Kingdom law – allowing businesses to continue operating knowing the rules have not changed overnight, and providing fairness to individuals, whose rights and obligations will not be subject to sudden change.

And third, the Bill will create the necessary powers to correct the laws that do not operate appropriately once we have left the EU, so that our legal system continues to function correctly outside the European Union.

I will address each of these elements in turn, Mr Speaker, before coming to the important issue of the interaction of the Bill with the devolution settlements.

Repeal of the ECA

Let me begin with the European Communities Act. Repealing the ECA on the day we leave the EU enables the return to this Parliament of the sovereignty we to some degree ceded in 1972, and ends the supremacy of EU law in this country. It is entirely necessary to deliver on the result of the referendum.

Conversion of EU law into UK law

But repealing the ECA alone is not enough. A simple repeal of the ECA would leave holes in our statute book. The EU Regulations that apply directly in the UK would no longer have any effect. And many of the domestic regulations we have made to implement our EU obligations would fall away.

Therefore, to provide the maximum possible legal certainty, the Great Repeal Bill will convert EU law into domestic law on the day we leave the European Union. This means, for example, that the workers' rights, environmental protection and consumer rights that are enjoyed under EU law in the UK will continue to be available in UK law after we have left the European Union.

Once EU law has been converted into domestic law, Parliament will be able to pass legislation to amend, repeal or improve any piece of European Union law it chooses – as will the devolved legislatures, where they have power to do so.

However, further steps will be needed to provide a smooth and orderly exit. This is because a large number of laws – both existing domestic laws and those we convert into UK law – will not work properly if we leave the EU without taking further action. Some laws, for example, grant functions to an EU institution with which the UK will no longer have a relationship.

To overcome this, the Great Repeal Bill will provide a power to correct the statute book where necessary to resolve the problems which will occur as a consequence of leaving the European Union.

This will be done using secondary legislation, the flexibility of which will make sure we have put in place the necessary corrections before the day we leave the EU.

I can confirm this power will be time-limited. And Parliament will need to be satisfied that the procedures in the Bill for making and approving the secondary legislation are appropriate.

Given the scale of the changes that will be necessary and the finite amount of time available to make them, there is a balance to be struck between the importance of scrutiny and correcting the statute book in time. As the Constitution Committee in the other place recently put it, '...the challenge Parliament will face is in balancing the need for speed, and thus for Governmental discretion, with the need for proper parliamentary control of the content of the UK's statute book.'

Parliament of course can – and does – regularly debate and vote on secondary legislation: we are not considering some form of Government 'executive orders', but using a legislative process of long standing.

I hope today's White Paper and this statement can be the start of a discussion between Parliament and Government about how best to achieve this balance.

Similar corrections will be needed to the statute books of the three devolved administrations, and so we propose that the Bill will also give ministers in the devolved administrations a power to amend devolved legislation to correct their law in line with the way that UK ministers will be able to correct UK law.

CJEU case law

Mr Speaker, let me turn to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and its case law. I can confirm that the Great Repeal Bill will provide no future role for the CJEU in the interpretation of our laws, and the Bill will not oblige our courts to consider cases decided by the CJEU after we have left.

However, for as long as EU-derived law remains on the UK statute book, it is essential that there is a common understanding of what that law means. The Government believes that this is best achieved by providing for continuity in how that law is interpreted before and after exit day.

To maximise certainty, therefore, the Bill will provide that any question as to the meaning of EU law that has been converted into UK law will be determined in the UK courts by reference to the CJEU's case law as it exists on the day we leave the EU.

Any other starting point would be to change the law and create unnecessary uncertainty.

This approach maximises legal certainty at the point of departure. But our intention is not to fossilise the past decisions of the CJEU.

As such, we propose that the Bill will provide that historic CJEU case law be given the same status in our courts as decisions of our own Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court does not frequently depart from its own decisions, but it does so from time to time. And we would expect the Supreme Court to take a similar, sparing, approach to departing from CJEU case law, but we believe it is right that it should have the power to do so.

Of course Parliament will be free to change the law, and therefore overturn case law, where it decides it is right to do so.

Charter of Fundamental Rights

Mr Speaker, today's White Paper also sets out the Great Repeal Bill's approach to the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Let me explain our approach here.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights only applies to member states when they act within the scope of European Union law. This means its relevance is removed by our withdrawal from the European Union.

The Government has been clear that in leaving the European Union, the UK's leading role in protecting and advancing human rights will not change. And the fact that the Charter will fall away will not mean the protection of rights in the UK will suffer as a result.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights was not designed to create new rights, but rather to catalogue rights already recognised as general principles in EU law. Something recognised by a previous government that brought it in with a protocol attached to it in back in 2007.

Where cases have been decided by reference to those rights, that case law will continue to be used to interpret the underlying rights which will be preserved.

Devolution

Mr Speaker, I would like to now turn to devolution. The United Kingdom's domestic constitutional arrangements have evolved since the UK joined the European Economic Community in 1973. The current devolution settlements were agreed after the UK joined, and reflect that context.

In areas where the devolved administrations and legislatures have competence, such as agriculture, the environment and some areas of transport, this competence is exercised within the constraints set by European Union law.

The existence of common EU frameworks has had the effect of providing a common UK framework in many areas, safeguarding the functioning of the UK internal market.

As powers return from the EU, we have an opportunity to determine the level best placed to take decisions on these issues, ensuring power sits closer to the people of the United Kingdom than ever before.

It is the expectation of the Government that the outcome of this process will be a significant increase in the decision making power of each devolved

administration. But we must also ensure that – as we leave the EU – no new barriers to living and doing business within our own Union are created.

In some areas, this will require common UK frameworks. Decisions will be required about where a common framework is needed and, if it is, how it might be established. The devolved administrations also acknowledge the importance of common UK frameworks.

We will work closely with the devolved administrations to deliver an approach that works for the whole of the United Kingdom and reflects the needs and individual circumstances of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by stressing the importance of the Great Repeal Bill.

It will help to ensure certainty and stability across the board. It is vital to ensuring a smooth and orderly exit. It will stand us in good stead for negotiations over our future relationship with the EU. And it will deliver greater control over our laws to this Parliament and, wherever appropriate, the devolved administrations.

These steps are crucial to implementing the result of the referendum in the national interest.

I hope all sides will recognise that, and work with us to achieve these aims.

I commend this statement to the House.