

CMA requires viagogo to sell StubHub's international business

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has concluded that the merger between viagogo and StubHub will lead to a substantial reduction in competition in the secondary ticketing market in the UK. This could lead to customers who use secondary ticketing platforms facing higher fees or poorer service in future. To address this concern, the CMA is requiring viagogo to sell StubHub's business outside North America.

This will mean that the StubHub international business – including in the UK – will be independently owned and run by a separate company, with no input from viagogo.

The CMA will determine key conditions of the sale, such as the right of the purchaser to use the StubHub brand for the next 10 years. The CMA will also need to approve the purchaser of the business before any sale.

Viagogo acquired StubHub in February 2020. StubHub's ticketing business operates in a number of territories including North America, the UK and several countries in Europe, and South America and Asia. In the UK, viagogo and StubHub are the 2 main providers of secondary ticketing platforms.

To reach today's decision, a group of independent CMA panel members considered evidence from customers, competitors and other stakeholders, including consumer groups.

The evidence shows that viagogo and StubHub compete closely against each other in the UK's secondary ticketing market and have no significant competitors. Together, they have a combined market share of more than 90% and are the number 1 and number 2 players respectively in the UK.

The CMA also reviewed the evidence on whether other distribution channels – capped-price ticket exchanges, classified ad sites (like Gumtree), social media and the primary ticketing market itself – would be able to compete strongly with the merged entity. It found that these would not be able to stop the merged business from pushing up fees or reducing quality of service.

The CMA has been mindful of the significant impact that the coronavirus (COVID-19) is currently having on the live events industry through-out its investigation. However, the evidence is that viagogo and StubHub would remain important competitors as and when the live events industry recovers.

Stuart McIntosh, Chair of the CMA inquiry group, said:

The CMA has focused on ensuring competition in this sector works best for UK consumers. After examining all the options, including unwinding the merger in full, the evidence shows that viagogo selling StubHub's international business will resolve our

competition concerns, effectively and proportionately.

Creating a fully independent StubHub international business will maintain competition in the UK and help ensure that the users of these ticketing platforms don't face higher prices or poorer quality of service.

For more information, visit the [viagogo/StubHub merger inquiry case page](#).

Notes to editors

1. Secondary Ticketing Platforms facilitate the resale of tickets to live sports, music and theatrical events, where resale of such tickets is permitted.

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Natural England Chair welcomes Dasgupta Review

Natural England's Chair, Tony Juniper, today (2 February) welcomes the publication of the Dasgupta Review, hailing it a significant milestone in recognising the irreplaceable and vital roles played by healthy natural systems in supporting our economy and society.

Led up by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta, the Review presents the first comprehensive economic framework of its kind for biodiversity. It calls for urgent and transformative change in how we think, act and measure economic success to protect and enhance the natural world as an essential prerequisite for sustaining our present and future prosperity.

The Review makes it clear that our economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the natural world and that degrading nature increasingly exposes the world to a host of risks. It points out how increased risk of pandemic is one threat that comes in the wake of the unsustainable relationship we have with our environment.

Welcoming the Review, Natural England Chair, Tony Juniper, said:

For too long it has been widely assumed that the degradation of the environment was a necessary price of progress. This Review reveals, however, that the opposite is in fact the case, and how a healthy natural world is essential for sustaining the health of our economy and society.

The clear upshot is that we now need to ensure collective and sustained action to ensure the natural world on which we depend is not only protected, but also restored at transformational scale. This will require a step change in investment, both public and private, in the recovery of Nature.

The restoration of the natural world will bring a range of valuable dividends, making this one of the wisest investments we can make, with rich returns seen in, for example, improved public health and wellbeing, catching carbon from the air, helping us adapt to the changing climate, ensuring supplies of clean water, boosting tourism and protecting our future food security.

The Review affirms the fact that biodiversity is declining faster than at any time in human history. Current extinction rates, for example, are around 100 to 1,000 times higher than the baseline rate, and they are increasing. Such declines are undermining Nature's productivity, resilience and adaptability, and are in turn fuelling extreme risk and uncertainty for our economies and well-being.

Dasgupta's analysis highlights the need to engage society in nature for the sake of wellbeing and health, but also as a means to invest in future action. [Evidence from Natural England](#) supports this, showing that almost half the population say that they are spending more time outside than before the pandemic and the overwhelming majority consider nature is important to them, their health and their happiness.

Tony Juniper added:

Here in England we have a golden opportunity to make the shift we

need to see, through the government's 25 Year Environment Plan and backed by the Environment Bill and other legislation and policies, especially in farming, all of which will help to deliver our landmark Nature Recovery Network.

The [Nature Recovery Network Delivery Partnership](#), led by Natural England, will bring together representatives from over 600 organisations to drive forward the restoration of our protected sites and landscapes and help provide at least 500,000 hectares of additional new wildlife-rich habitat across England. It is the biggest initiative to restore nature ever to be launched in England.

Today's publication comes ahead of COP15 for Biological Diversity, where new long-term international targets for addressing biodiversity loss are expected to be agreed; and COP26 for climate change, where nature and nature-based solutions to climate change are expected to play a prominent role.

UK Human Rights Ambassador visits Uzbekistan

World news story

UK International Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French held a virtual visit to Uzbekistan.



Rita French, the UK International Ambassador for Human Rights, paid her first "virtual" visit to Uzbekistan on 20-21 January 2021.

The purpose of the visit was primarily to enhance the bilateral relations between the UK and Uzbekistan in the area of human rights, and to engage in detailed aspects of the political relationship, covering human rights issues, including torture, media freedom, parliamentary work, civil society, religion, gender equality and others.

During the visit Ambassador French met high-level Uzbek officials including Ms Tanzila Narbaeva, Chairperson of the Senate, Dr Akmal Saidov, First Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Chamber and Director of the National Human Rights Centre. Ambassador French also held meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ombudsman's office, local NGOs, and civil society activists.

Commenting on her visit, Ambassador French said:

It was a great pleasure to make my first virtual visit to Uzbekistan. I hope that the global health situation will soon enable me to visit in person. The UK is committed to supporting human rights around the world. Our discussions with the government of Uzbekistan covered many topics. It is clear that progress has been made in a number of important areas, but also that further reform is still needed. The UK will continue to support the Uzbek government and civil society in their efforts to protect and advance human rights and freedoms.

Further information

The UK International Ambassador for Human Rights works with other countries to support and advance human rights and promote the UK's priority campaigns.

Rita French is the Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva and the UK International Ambassador for Human Rights.

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Buy-now-pay-later products to be regulated

- interest-free buy-now-pay-later agreements will be regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority
- government acts swiftly to protect consumers after review finds potential for harm
- lenders will be required to carry out affordability checks on customers and ensure the vulnerable are treated fairly

Buy-now-pay-later products are rapidly increasing in popularity, with the volume of transactions tripling in 2020 as the pandemic drove online shopping, and there is now a significant risk that these agreements could cause harm to consumers.

By announcing plans to legislate to bring interest-free buy-now-pay-later into regulation, the government is acting swiftly to ensure people can continue to benefit from these products with the right protections.

The announcement comes as a review of the unsecured credit market, led by Christopher Woolard, recommends bringing interest-free buy-now-pay-later into FCA supervision.

John Glen, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, said:

Buy-now-pay-later can be a helpful way to manage your finances but there is a real risk that consumers could be harmed as these agreements become ever more popular. By stepping in and regulating, we're making sure people are treated fairly and only offered agreements they can afford – the same protections you'd expect with other loans.

Buy-now-pay-later has clear benefits – such as allowing people to manage their finances by spreading the cost of a purchase interest-free – but the Woolard Review found several potential harms which can be mitigated by bringing these agreements into regulation.

Many consumers do not view interest-free buy-now-pay-later as a form of credit, so do not apply the same level of scrutiny, and checks undertaken by providers tend to focus on the risk for the firm rather than how affordable it is for the customer.

Although the average transaction tends to be relatively low, shoppers can take out multiple agreements with different providers – and the Review finds it would be relatively easy to accrue around £1,000 of debt that credit reference agencies and mainstream lenders cannot see.

With several buy-now-pay-later providers planning to expand to higher-value retailers, or offer their products in-store, the risk that consumers could take on unaffordable levels of debt is increasing.

The government's decision to bring buy-now-pay-later into regulation will mitigate these risks by giving the Financial Conduct Authority oversight of buy-now-pay-later providers and allowing people to escalate their complaint to the Financial Ombudsman Service if things go wrong.

Under these plans, providers will be subject to FCA rules so will need to undertake affordability checks before lending and ensure customers are treated fairly, particularly those who are vulnerable or struggling with repayments.

The Woolard Review made a series of additional recommendations across the unsecured credit market. The government welcomes these proposals, which it will examine and respond to in due course.

Further information