

UK and Switzerland to deepen cooperation on financial services

News story

Plans to move forward to the next stage of talks between the UK and Switzerland on an agreement on financial services were agreed between the Chancellor Rishi Sunak and Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer today.



Following successful initial exploratory talks, the two countries will move forward with negotiations on the ambition of delivering a comprehensive mutual recognition agreement that would reduce costs and barriers for UK firms accessing the Swiss market, and vice versa. Negotiations are expected to cover a wide range of sectors such as insurance, banking, asset management and capital markets, including market infrastructure.

In addition, the Chancellor also held a roundtable today with some of the biggest global banks. The Chancellor reiterated the Government's commitment to the future of UK financial services, and confidence that Britain will remain one of the world's pre-eminent financial centres having left the EU. This will be followed next week by a meeting with representatives from the insurance industry, asset managers and other firms from across the sector.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak said: "The UK and Switzerland are both global financial centres, with a shared commitment to high standards of regulation, market integrity and investor protection. Our ambition is to deliver one of the most comprehensive agreements of its kind in financial services as part of our plan to seize new opportunities in the global economy now we have left the EU."

Discussions between the UK and Switzerland are set to continue at official level over coming months.

Earlier this month, the UK laid regulations aimed at granting share trading equivalence to Switzerland's trading venues. Subject to parliamentary approval this will come into force on 3 February 2021. Once the UK decision is in force it's expected that the Swiss will reciprocate by removing

restrictions on UK trading venues.

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Corby career criminal jailed for stockpiling waste

A 68-year-old Corby man is behind bars after repeated waste offences spanning the course of the last decade.

Stephen Lack, of Monkton Sidings, Corby, was responsible for an illegal waste site that put human health and the environment at risk.

Her Honour Judge Lucking QC, sitting at Northampton Crown Court on 25 January 2021, sentenced Lack to 18 months' immediate imprisonment after he had pleaded guilty to breaching environmental laws at an earlier hearing following a prosecution by the Environment Agency.

Lack, trading under the name Abbey Skips, repeatedly stockpiled waste on a site at Monkton Sidings, Fineshade, without the necessary permits.

Any business that handles, stores, treats or disposes of waste must hold the right Environment Agency permits. The permitting process ensures precautions are taken to protect people and nature from harm.

But in the hearing on 14 October 2020, the court heard how Lack repeatedly and deliberately ignored advice and warnings from the Environment Agency that his actions were illegal and dangerous.

Environment Agency lawyer Sarah Dunne told the court that his activities risked contaminating nearby woods and farmland, caused odours and toxic smoke, and could have attracted large quantities of flies and other vermin.

She said that Lack had saved thousands of pounds by burning and burying his waste rather than disposing of his waste lawfully at authorised waste sites.

Lack did initially have a permit to run the waste site in 2009, but a year later, he was already in court for illegally burning waste, resulting in noxious fumes and odours. Despite being ordered to pay thousands in fines and costs, he continued to offend. The permit was revoked in 2011 and Lack was ordered to clear the site by the following spring.

When officers followed up in March 2012, it appeared Lack was complying. But 5 years later, complaints started pouring in from the local community. Environment Agency officers responded and found waste was again being stored and burnt on the site.

Again Lack was warned to stop these activities – advice he ignored – and environment officers soon discovered he was also storing a further 1,000 tonnes of waste at a second site at Easton on the Hill.

In April 2019, Lack pleaded guilty to a number of charges arising from his activities and was handed a 6 month sentence, suspended for 2 years, for ‘intentionally and flagrantly disregarding the law’ intended to protect the environment.

Wary environment officers kept an eye on Lack’s land and were shocked when, less than a month after the sentencing, activities once again ramped up – including more illegal burning.

Lack was arrested and released on bail, but warned by the court that he’d be remanded in custody if he was found to be involved in ‘any activity remotely connected with waste.’

In the midst of last summer’s coronavirus lockdown, Lack’s return to his old ways saw him breach the conditions of his bail. Officers visiting the Monkton Sidings site in July and August saw multiple skips arrive full of tyres, metal and other waste – and caught Lack himself operating the machinery.

Lack was again arrested in September amidst further evidence of burning and burial of waste.

Judge Lucking described Lack’s offending as ‘blatant’ and told him that ‘he had a history of significant disobedience to court orders and had shown a complete disregard to instructions given by the Environment Agency.’

The judge made an order requiring Lack to clean up the site within the next 12 months, and adjourned the consideration of a claim for more than £30,000 Environment Agency costs until March 2021.

Yvonne Daly, Environment Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

It’s our job to regulate waste activity to make sure it doesn’t put people or the environment at risk.

This case is a shocking example of an individual driven by profit blatantly ignoring their responsibilities, putting people and nature in harm’s way, and attempting to undercut legitimate businesses.

The custodial sentence reflects the seriousness of the crime, and we hope it serves as a warning to others – we won’t hesitate to take action against those flout the rules.

Anyone who suspects illegal waste activity is reminded to report it to our 24-hour hotline by calling 0800 80 70 60, or anonymously contacting Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Last year, the Environment Agency and partners launched the [Joint Unit for Waste Crime](#), aiming to stop serious and organised crime in the UK Waste Industry.

Additional information

On 14 October 2020, Stephen Lack pleaded guilty to breaching Regulations 12 and 38(1)(a) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 by depositing, treating and storing of waste other than was allowed by the conditions of his permit.

[Consultation launched on next phase of bovine TB eradication strategy](#)

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[Sopra Steria awarded contract to run traffic information service until 2026](#)

Press release

Highways England has awarded Sopra Steria the National Traffic Information Service (NTIS) contract to provide round-the-clock real-time traffic information about England's busiest roads.



The national traffic operations centre in Birmingham

The service is a vital tool to help Highways England's operations teams and the emergency services to keep traffic moving and respond to incidents as efficiently as possible.

It helps road users plan their journeys, avoid delays and stay safe on England's motorways and major A roads by providing the latest information to journey-planning website [TrafficEngland.com](https://www.trafficengland.com) and to the electronic message signs on the network.

Meryl Roberts, Highways England's Operations and Performance team leader, said:

It is very important that drivers have the right information to help them to make choices about their journeys and reduce congestion.

Sopra Steria will develop the already excellent service for everyone who uses our roads.

Adrian Fieldhouse, Managing Director, Sopra Steria's Government Sector, said:

We're delighted to be working with Highways England on the development of the National Traffic Information Service, leveraging our road traffic management and digital transformation experience from London, Singapore and around the globe to tackle some of today's biggest infrastructure challenges – including pollution, road safety and congestion.

Sopra Steria will run the service for an initial five years, with an option for the £41.85 million contract to be extended for a further two years.

The traffic information service forms part of Highways England's [customer service strategy](#) to provide better information to road users.

The Government's current advice is for people to take essential journeys

only.

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.

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37th Universal Periodic Review: UK statement on São Tomé and Príncipe

World news story

Rita French, UK Ambassador for Human Rights, delivered this statement on São Tomé and Príncipe at the 37th Session of Universal Periodic Review (UPR), sharing recommendations to improve their human rights record.



UK Government

Thank you, Madam President,

The United Kingdom recognises São Tomé and Príncipe's efforts to protect human rights through the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocol aiming at the abolition of the death penalty.

The UK commends São Tomé and Príncipe for the delivery of peaceful elections in 2018 and encourages a free and transparent electoral process in accordance with international human rights standards for the 2021 Presidential elections.

We recommend that São Tomé and Príncipe:

1. Eliminate all forms of child labour as set out under the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C182) through the implementation of the National Action Plan.
2. Implement the commitment made at the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25 to achieve zero unmet needs for family planning by 2030 and increase the prevalence of contraception from 41% to 50% as stated in 2019-2022 National FP Strategic Plan.
3. Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the

Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Thank you.

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