

New regulator established to ensure construction materials are safe

- National regulator established to ensure homes are built from safe materials
- Action taken as Grenfell Inquiry reveals manufacturers ignored safety rules
- Independent review will examine faults in the system and recommend how abuse can be prevented

Residents will be protected through the establishment of a national regulator which will ensure materials used to build homes will be made safer, the Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick has announced today (19 January 2021).

The regulator for construction products will have the power to remove any product from the market that presents a significant safety risk and prosecute any companies who flout the rules on product safety.

This follows recent testimony to the Grenfell Inquiry that shone a light on the dishonest practice by some manufacturers of construction products, including deliberate attempts to game the system and rig the results of safety tests.

The regulator will have strong enforcement powers including the ability to conduct its own product-testing when investigating concerns. Businesses must ensure that their products are safe before being sold in addition to testing products against safety standards.

This marks the next major chapter in the government's fundamental overhaul of regulatory systems. The progress on regulatory reform includes the publication of an ambitious draft Building Safety Bill, representing the biggest improvements to regulations in 40 years, and a new Building Safety Regulator that is already up and running in shadow form.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

The Grenfell Inquiry has heard deeply disturbing allegations of malpractice by some construction product manufacturers and their employees, and of the weaknesses of the present product testing regime.

We are establishing a national regulator to address these concerns and a review into testing to ensure our national approach is fit for purpose. We will continue to listen to the evidence emerging in the Inquiry, and await the judge's ultimate recommendation – but it is already clear that action is required now and that is what we are doing.

Business Minister and Minister for London Paul Scully said:

We all remember the tragic scenes at Grenfell Tower, and the entirely justified anger which so many of us in London and throughout the UK continue to feel at the failings it exposed.

This must never happen again, which is why we are launching a new authority to test and regulate the safety of construction materials, informed by the expertise that already exists within the Office for Product Safety and Standards.

Chair of the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety Dame Judith Hackitt said:

This is another really important step in delivering the new regulatory system for building safety. The evidence of poor practice and lack of enforcement in the past has been laid bare. As the industry itself starts to address its shortcomings I see a real opportunity to make great progress in conjunction with the national regulator.

The regulator will operate within the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) which will be expanded and given up to £10 million in funding to establish the new function. It will work with the Building Safety Regulator and Trading Standards to encourage and enforce compliance.

The government has also commissioned an independent review to examine weaknesses in previous testing regimes for construction products, and to recommend how abuse of the testing system can be prevented.

It will be led by a panel of experts with regulatory, technical and construction industry experience and will report later this year with recommendations.

- The announcement follows recommendations in the [Dame Judith Hackitt Review](#) that industry and government must ensure that construction products are properly tested, certified, labelled and marketed.
- In July 2020, the government published in draft the [Building Safety Bill](#). The Bill set out the biggest reforms to building safety regulation for a generation, and included provisions to strengthen and extend the scope of the powers available to government to regulate construction products.
- Together, the Fire Safety Bill, Fire Safety Order and the Building Safety Bill will revolutionise safety and oversight for residents in all buildings.
- The government has published an [update of the progress and steps being taken since the Grenfell fire](#).

NDA Update

I am pleased to be able to share with you some significant developments within the NDA around our transport and waste businesses, further underlining our One NDA approach to working more collaboratively and efficiently to clean up the UK's earliest civil nuclear sites.

Nuclear Transport Solutions

In February 2020 we announced our decision to create a single nuclear transport division bringing together our transport expertise and capabilities across the NDA group.

The new organisation will be called Nuclear Transport Solutions (NTS) and I'm delighted to say it will start operating as a single organisation on 1 February, ahead of its full launch at the start of the 2021/22 financial year.

NTS will be a centre of excellence that brings together the operational, commercial, engineering, legal, and regulatory expertise that underpin nuclear transport and logistics operations. It will operate Direct Rail Services (DRS) and Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd (PNTL), who will continue to deliver rail and shipping services for customers, building on decades of experience of providing safe, secure and reliable transport solutions.

NTS's primary objective will be to support the NDA mission through a range of activities including transporting spent AGR fuel from UK power stations to Sellafield, moving irradiated fuels from Dounreay, returning reprocessing products to customers overseas, and packaging and licensing support to the NDA group.

Additionally, NTS will also use its world-leading expertise to provide commercial activities in the UK and overseas and bring further value by providing transport services for customers outside of the nuclear sector.

Creating a single waste division

As we continue to bring together vital areas of expertise, it's important we recognise that waste is a fundamental part of NDA's business. It's what we do and it drives a lot of our costs.

To deliver our mission more efficiently and effectively, there is an opportunity to think differently about how we manage waste, particularly as our clean-up activity moves from site operations to full scale decommissioning.

In November 2020, we launched our integrated waste management programme to act as a focal point for managing the UK's radioactive waste and to deliver

our integrated waste management strategy. The programme operates across the waste lifecycle, optimising our approach to how we treat, package, store, transport and dispose of waste.

It is now our intention to create a single waste division to bring together our group-wide waste management expertise enabling us to grow capability, simplify how we operate and deliver greater value for the taxpayer.

The new waste division will include our waste disposal companies LLWR and RWM. Corbyn Parr will lead the work to develop the new division on behalf of the NDA and will work closely with the CEOs of LLWR and RWM to determine how it should be shaped going forward.

I'd like to emphasise that the programme of work to bring LLWR Ltd under NDA ownership is unaffected, and we will continue to work closely with the PBO and LLWR to ensure a smooth transfer as planned on 12 July. The day to day operations of RWM and LLWR are unaffected by this announcement and our primary focus continues to be the safe delivery of our mission.

These decisions are important steps in support of our vision and the effective delivery of our mission.

David Peattie

Group CEO and Accounting Officer

NDA

A vision for UK seas

Thank you for inviting me back to speak at this year's Ocean Recovery event, and to celebrate the work that has been going on across our marine space. I join you today at the beginning of an exciting new era for the UK, and at a time where the ocean is central to supporting a healthy marine environment alongside a successful fishing industry.

2020 was a challenging year for all of us, but our marine ambition has remained strong. The UK is a global leader in protecting our ocean and marine life, and has demonstrated this leadership over the last year through a number of commitments.

Alongside WWF, the European Commission and Costa Rica, the UK led the development of the [Leader's Pledge for Nature](#), which was launched in September at the UN General Assembly and is now supported by 82 signatories and the EU.

The Pledge aims to reset humanity's relationship with nature, and sets the tone for a step-change in global ambition for climate and biodiversity both

on land and at sea, to put biodiversity on a path to recovery.

Thirty-eight countries have also now joined the Global Ocean Alliance, which supports the target to protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030, and this number of continues to grow.

Alongside this, the UK is now the Ocean Co-Chair of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People. At the One Planet Summit on 11 January, we were proud to announce that between the two alliances, 66 countries now support the 30by30 ocean protection target.

The UK has a rich wealth of marine life, and now that the Transition Period has ended and we have secured a settlement with the EU, we are recognised as an independent coastal state with sovereign control of our waters.

No longer bound by the Common Fisheries Policy, the UK has a real opportunity to enhance the protection of our marine environment, and place sustainability at the heart of our fisheries policies. This includes working closely with my colleague Minister Prentis to join up our work across marine and fisheries, and we have already hit the ground running.

[The Fisheries Act 2020](#), the first primary legislation on fisheries in the UK to be passed in nearly 40 years, has eight objectives of which six focus on sustainable fishing and environmental protection. The objectives of the Act, alongside our Marine Policy Statement and UK Marine Strategy, act as the major pillars to the protection of our marine environment.

2021 is an exciting year, marking an unprecedented alignment of international and domestic marine agendas, which is why we are calling it our 'Super Year'. There is much to look forward to.

The UK is committed to playing a leading role in developing an ambitious post-2020 framework for biodiversity, to be adopted at COP15 of the upcoming Convention on Biological Diversity. Through the UK's COP26 Presidency this November in partnership with Italy, we will place Nature at the core of our approach to the Conference, recognising the crucial role of Nature-based Solutions for climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience, and working closely with governments, businesses and civic organisations. You'll hear more about the role of nature-based solutions in Session 6.

But, the UK's global leadership really starts with our ambition and delivery at home.

Marine Protected Areas

The UK continues to take marine protection seriously, and remains committed to delivering a well-managed network of Marine Protected Areas. Since I spoke last year, the total number of UK Marine Protected Areas has risen to 371, covering 38% of UK waters.

This includes extending the existing Marine Protected Area in the Isle of Scilly by approximately 13,000 hectares to protect internationally important populations of storm petrel and lesser black-backed gulls. And, working with

the Scottish Government, we have also extended the Solway Firth SPA by 92,000 hectares to offer further protections to red-throated diver and ringed plover.

We have now shifted our focus to site management. In October, the Marine Management Organisation launched a [Call for Evidence](#) to seek views on draft assessments of the impacts of fishing within four offshore MPAs, including the Dogger Bank site. The Call for Evidence closed in December, and the information received is now being reviewed and used to update and finalise the draft assessments. The MMO will be consulting on these byelaws from February.

Our commitment to marine protection also extends to our Overseas Territories, where the UK has now exceeded its target of protecting 4 million square kilometres of ocean. The announcement in November by Tristan da Cunha of a new Marine Protection Zone has safeguarded the future of sevengill sharks, yellow-nosed albatrosses and rockhopper penguins in the remote archipelago.

HPMA review

Yet, there is still more we can do, and are doing. On World Ocean Day 2020, we announced the publication of the report of the independent review into whether and how Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) should be introduced in Secretary of State waters. This includes how HPMAs can enhance the protection of blue carbon habitats, which have a role to play in climate mitigation and adaptation.

The Review, led by former Fisheries Minister Richard Benyon, recommended that HPMAs are an essential part of the UK MPA network for protection and recovery of the marine environment and the government should introduce HPMAs within existing Marine Protected Areas. On 20 July 2020 the Secretary of State announced that he intends to pilot HPMAs.

The government welcomes the report, and recognises the potential role of HPMAs in securing our vision to leave the environment in a better state than which we found it.

We are looking closely at the recommendations, and working with key stakeholder groups, to inform a cross-government response. Jen Ashworth is going to talk more about this in Session 15.

Marine Planning

Going further still, we recognise that committing to a clean, healthy, safe and productive marine environment requires effective and sustainable management, in order to benefit both our coastal communities and the wider UK economy.

The Government is committed to ensuring that there is a full set of marine plans in place this year, meeting the commitment made in the 25 Year Environment Plan. These marine plans will be a significant milestone for the Government in supporting sustainable development for our marine area, whilst ensuring the on-going protection of the marine environment.

We have already published the East and South Marine Plans, and the remaining marine plans for England are being brought forward in parallel and are well progressed.

The UK Marine Strategy

Of course, being able to implement all of this effectively requires a clear UK vision for clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse seas. The UK Marine Strategy give us this. The Strategy provides a robust framework for assessing and taking measures to achieve and maintain Good Environmental Status in our seas. It covers a comprehensive range of biodiversity and marine environment indicators from marine species and habitats to contaminants, marine litter and underwater noise.

While the Strategy update report published in October 2019 showed we have made good progress towards achieving Good Environmental Status in some areas, it also highlighted that further action is necessary to achieve that ambition. This is where we are focusing our efforts.

In Spring this year, we aim to publish Part Two of the Strategy. This will set out the monitoring programmes to track our progress towards updated [Good Environmental Status targets set out in Part One in 2019](#). This will be followed by the update to Part Three, which sets out the programme of measures we will implement in order to achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status for UK seas.

Green Recovery Challenge Funding

Meanwhile, we all know the challenges the pandemic has posed this year, and the future will be very different as a result of COVID-19. Respecting, valuing and restoring nature will deliver a more resilient, sustainable green and blue recovery helping to deliver the UK's net zero ambitions.

Recognising this, the Government announced a [Green Recovery Challenge Fund](#) in September which is now worth £80m, to kick-start a pipeline of nature-based projects to restore nature, tackle climate change and connect people with the natural environment. Protection of our coastal species and ecosystems are amongst successful projects to-date, including Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust, Ocean Conservation Trust's seagrass project, and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's projects on seagrass and oysters.

Following the success of the first round of £40m, the Government has confirmed that it will double the size of the fund by making an additional £40 million investment. Round 2 will be launched in early 2021.

Seabird Conservation Strategy

When I spoke to you this time last year, I announced the development of a comprehensive Seabird Conservation Strategy for England.

It is critical that our strategy is based on the best possible evidence and that we work with our stakeholders to make sure it is implemented effectively. Following the advice of our Steering group, I have commissioned

a comprehensive review of the different pressures our seabirds are facing, in order to develop a holistic strategy with action targeted where it is needed most. We will be collaborating closely with stakeholders – including conservation organisations, scientists and industry as these plans develop.

But we have not stopped there. In the past year we have already taken a series of actions that will help support our iconic seabird populations.

By expanding our protected areas in the [Isle of Scilly](#) and the [Solway Firth](#), we have protected an additional total of 140,000 seabirds.

We have also decided to remove lesser black-backed and herring gulls from general licences, following extensive scientific and stakeholder consultation.

We are working with stakeholders to tackle bycatch through developing our UK Plan of Action on Seabird Bycatch, including a recent workshop whose report will be published this Thursday. Lessons learned from the workshop are guiding the development of the Plan of Action and associated toolkit. Together these will set out the objectives and means by which we can reduce seabird bycatch based on the experiences of those who understand it best.

I am pleased that we will be supporting the RSPB's vital work improving island biosecurity measures that will help safeguard the UK's internationally-important seabird islands.

Offshore Wind Enabling Actions Programme

Our work on the Seabird Conservation Strategy is not our only exciting development. As I'm sure many of you will have seen, in November, the Prime Minister set out the plans for a Green Industrial Revolution through the government's ambitious Ten-Point Plan. The Plan has paved the way for the environment to play a vital role in our approach to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss and ensure a green economic recovery from COVID-19. In December, building on the Ten Point Plan announcement, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy published its Energy White Paper, putting net zero and our efforts to fight climate change at its core.

And this is why I am so pleased that in the autumn budget, the Chancellor announced a £4.3m funding for an Offshore Wind Enabling Actions Programme. This is a cross-Government programme, being delivered in partnership with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. It is focused on work to improve the understanding of adverse environmental impacts from offshore wind construction, and develop a cross-Government approach to compensating for them, as well as reducing the impacts of underwater noise, introducing net gain in a marine context and using big data to improve consenting and monitoring. These projects will help reduce consenting delays, support economic recovery and help meet the Government's net zero commitments.

Super Year 2021 is clearly critical for renewed action on the ocean, both internationally and at home too. The message remains clear: we must protect

and improve ocean health and resilience to address the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. By doing so, this will in turn help us to enhance our competitive marine industries, including sustainable fishing, and contribute to thriving coastal communities. With that in mind, I am looking forward to hearing about the excellent work going on across the piece, as we join together for ocean recovery in our collective mission to build back better.

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CMA lifts the lid on impact of algorithms

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is [now seeking evidence](#) from academics and industry experts on the potential harms to competition and consumers caused by the deliberate or unintended misuse of algorithms. It is also looking for intelligence on specific issues with particular firms that the CMA could examine and consider for future action. The research and feedback will inform the CMA's future work in digital markets, including its programme on analysing algorithms and the operation of the [new Digital Markets Unit](#) (DMU), and the brand-new regulatory regime that the DMU will oversee.

Much of people's lives is spent online, be it consuming news, socialising, dating, ordering food, or arranging travel. Many of these online activities and the markets that underpin them could not exist without algorithms, often

in the form of artificial intelligence, and these have enabled considerable gains in efficiency and effectiveness. However, they can negatively impact consumers in various ways.

Algorithms can be used to personalise services in ways that are difficult to detect, leading to search results that can be manipulated to reduce choice or artificially change consumers' perceptions. An example of this is misleading messages which suggest a product is in short supply.

Companies can also use algorithms to change the way they rank products on websites, preferencing their own products and excluding competitors. More complex algorithms could aid collusion between businesses without firms directly sharing information. This could lead to sustained higher prices for products and services.

The majority of algorithms used by private firms online are currently subject to little or no regulatory oversight and the research concludes that more monitoring and action is required by regulators, including the CMA. The CMA has already considered the impact of algorithms on competition and consumers in previous investigations, for example [monitoring the pricing practices of online travel agents](#).

Kate Brand, Director of Data Science, said:

"Algorithms play an important role online but, if not used responsibly, can potentially do a tremendous amount of harm to consumers and businesses. Assessing this harm is the first step towards being able to ensure consumers are protected and complements our wider work in digital markets to promote greater competition and innovation online."

"We want to receive as much information as possible from stakeholders in academia, the competition community, firms, civil society and third sector organisations in order to understand where the harm is occurring and what the most effective regulatory approach is to protect consumers in the future."

This work is being led by the CMA's Data, Technology and Analytics (DaTA) unit, the largest team of data and technology experts in any competition or consumer agency worldwide.

As well as playing a vital role in informing the work of the new regulator, the DMU, it will play a key role in supporting our wider [Digital Markets Strategy](#) to protect consumers in dynamic markets online. The CMA intends to work closely with the ICO and Ofcom, through the Digital Regulation Cooperation Forum, in taking this work forward.

For more information, visit the [algorithms paper](#) web page.

For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.