Press release: Minister urges households to recycle as much as possible over Christmas

Households across the country are being encouraged by the Minister for Local Government, Marcus Jones, to make it a record-breaking year for recycling over the Christmas period.

It's estimated that the UK recycled a staggering 289,000 tonnes of card packaging last Christmas. However, with the weight of paper and card not collected equating to nearly 2,000 blue whales, there's cause for everyone to double their recycling efforts this year.

From wrapping paper to Christmas cards, mince pie foil cases to Christmas trees, there's a host of items that can be easily recycled or disposed of in a responsible, eco-friendly way.

Local authorities across the UK are offering helpful tips, guidance and even some dedicated treecycling services to help residents recycle as much as they can over the Christmas period:

- Trafford Council has produced the 'naughty or nice' list of items that can and can't be recycled.
- Cambridgeshire County Council has issued 12 top recycling tips to help residents make it a great recycling Christmas!
- The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham offer residents a dedicated Christmas tree collection service on certain days and multiple drop-off points located across the borough for residents who want to 'treecycle.' The council estimate that it will recycle over 75 tonnes of festive firs over the holiday season.
- Swansea Council has released a downloadable 2018 recycling calendar so that residents can start the year as they mean to go on – recycling as much as possible.
- Lancaster City Council has partnered with St. John's Hospice to boost treecycling and raise money for charity; for a small donation, residents can pay to have their real Christmas trees collected from their doorsteps by hospice volunteers.

Minister for Local Government, Marcus Jones, said:

> Local authorities across the country are offering great initiatives to help us recycle as much as we can over the Christmas period – including the Christmas tree!
>
> I'm encouraging households to find out what schemes are running in their area so that they can maximise their recycling and treecycling this year!

Here are DCLG's top 5 recycling tips for the festive season this year:

Recycle that cardboard!

A lot of Christmas gifts will come in recyclable cardboard packing – especially large electronic items such as laptops, televisions and computer game consoles. It's estimated that we could make a cardboard motorway stretching from Leeds to Lapland and back – 111 times – with all the card packaging we use at Christmas. Don't let it go to landfill!

Scrunch test your wrapping paper!

Did you know, paper or cards with glitter can't be recycled? The scrunch test is a helpful way to test whether your Christmas wrapping paper is recyclable.

If you literally scrunch the paper in your hand and it stays in a ball, it can be put into the recycling. Remember to remove ribbons, bows and other adornments before sticking it in the recycling.

Don't 'firget' to treecycle!

Millions of trees brighten up homes and offices across the UK each Christmas. These can be recycled for composting and wood chipping. The chippings can then be used locally in parks or woodland areas.

Some councils will collect Christmas trees with normal garden waste, some will have designated collections and others will have special drop-off points. Visit your local authority's website for detailed guidance. Find out more about the Forestry Commission's sustainable Christmas trees too.

Don't bin the festive fairy lights!

Fairy lights and other electronic Christmas decorations may be classed as Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE). These items must not be sent to landfill but disposed of at designated sites such as household waste recycling centres. If in doubt, check with your local authority for guidance on disposing of those old fairy lights.

You can go 'Cold Turkey'!

Who doesn't love leftovers? Christmas dinner stays fresh for at least a few days after the big event and for months or more if you put it in the freezer.

You can freeze cooked turkey and use it to make a new meal; if you're sick of

turkey and cranberry sandwiches, why not be creative and try making a turkey curry? Additional tips and advice can be found on the Food Standards Agency's website.

Press release: Work underway to refurbish River Nene's Wadenhoe Lock

Beneath the surface: Wadenhoe Lock was drained to allow essential work to take place, leaving us with this striking and not-often-seen view.

Wadenhoe Lock is getting a complete overhaul, including repairs to the structure, replacement of its mechanism, and a thorough paint job. This will help the lock stay in good, safe working order for decades to come.

The first phase of the work, which took place in November, required the lock to be drained of water, so that the parts usually beneath the surface could be fully inspected and repaired.

The lock is scheduled to close again between 3 January and 12 February for work to continue on the gates, mechanism and paintwork. These dates are subject to change.

Sign up for latest updates

Boaters can get the latest information by signing up for email updates or calling the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506 and asking for Anglian Waterways.

Andy Bennison, Anglian Waterways assets senior specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

> Our precious waterways are an important part of our nation's rich heritage and beauty. They are a national treasure, valued for their contribution to our environment, our health and wellbeing, and our economy. We're proud to play a part in caring for them, and we take that responsibility very seriously.
>
> Maintaining them to a good, safe working standard is our number-one priority. We invest money very carefully to ensure the best value for every pound we spend. This means our waterways will continue to offer outstanding value to the many, many people who enjoy them every year.

Part of £1.4m waterways investment

The refurbishment to Wadenhoe Lock is part of the Environment Agency's £1.4m investment into Anglian Waterways. The annual Capital Investment Programme sets out the repairs and upgrades being made across the 353-mile navigable network.

Wadenhoe Lock, which bypasses a Grade II-listed watermill with medieval origins, is located in one of the most picturesque areas of the River Nene. Its electrically-operated guillotine gates give access to around 7,000 boaters every year.

The Environment Agency looks after the lock, along with more than 353 miles of navigable waterways in the Anglian region, as well as a vast network of associated facilities such as bridges, locks, moorings and toilets. The agency's work enables thousands of boaters and more than a million other visitors to enjoy these waterways every year.

Complete refurbishment

The work on Wadenhoe Lock includes an engineering inspection of its chamber, replacement of the mitre gate pintle pins, cups and paddle gates, replacement of the vertical shaft and top bevel gears, replacement of the bearings on the horizontal shaft, repairs to the ladders and guillotine gate wheel tracks, an overhaul of the guillotine gate drive gear, and re-painting.

Press release: Action to make the process fairer on debt rulings

The government has launched a consultation on how county court judgments (CCJs) are issued, after concerns were raised that some rogue companies were deliberately sending claims to consumers using incorrect addresses. Credit ratings can be devastated, and the issue may only come to light years later when the individual's application for a mortgage, loan or car on finance is rejected.

A consultation launched today will seek formal evidence on the scale of the problem, and consult on how best to protect consumers and businesses.

Proposals include:

- striking a CCJ from the register immediately once unknown debts are resolved and a judge agrees the person was unaware;
- better protecting consumers who do not receive mail because it is sent to an old address;

- introducing a government information campaign providing a centralised, trusted source to raise awareness and help people deal with unresolved debts.

Launching the consultation, Justice Minister Dominic Raab said:

> We want to protect vulnerable consumers from abuse by rogue companies that can destroy the credit rating of innocent people without them even knowing about it.
>
> Debts should be paid, not exploited by a minority of cowboys who need reining in.

Over the past four years, the number of CCJs has risen by almost two thirds (59%), with over one million issued in 2016.

Throughout this year evidence has been gathered and discussions conducted with consumer groups, advice organisations and across government to assess the scale of the issue and ensure the right proposals are made.

Work is also going on in other government departments. The government has already taken steps to tackle rogue private parking operators, including banning wheel clamping and towing.

They are considering how they can deliver standardised practice across all parking companies, eliminating unfair charges and reducing the instances of claims where the consumer may be unaware of a parking charge being applied.

Press release: Policing and Fire Minister orders fire and rescue authorities to curb the practice of boomerang bosses

Minister for Policing and the Fire Service Nick Hurd has today (27 December) announced new rules to crack down on the employment of ‘boomerang bosses’ in England’s fire and rescue services.

The practice has seen senior fire officers retire from their post only to be re-appointed almost immediately and take advantage of favourable pay and pension terms potentially worth more than £20,000 a year.

Minister for Policing and the Fire Service Nick Hurd said:

> This Government is reforming fire and rescue services to ensure they are more accountable and effective in performing their vital duties.
>
> The practice of boomerang bosses is not acceptable, which is why we have taken action to rule it out.
>
> It undermines confidence in the fire and rescue services, who do such a brilliant job keeping us safe and gives the impression there is one rule for rank and file firefighters and another for those at the top.

Following a consultation earlier this year, the Home Office is issuing new rules preventing fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) re-appointing senior fire officers post-retirement other than in exceptional circumstances. Any re-appointments will have to be agreed by a vote of the members of the FRAs and should only be considered where it is necessary to protect public safety.

A long-serving chief fire officer on a typical salary of around £140,000 can potentially access a lump sum from their pension pot of over £400,000 and then avoid employee pension contributions of more than £20,000 a year after being re-employed in the same role.

The new rules are included in a revised Fire and Rescue National Framework for England being consulted on today. The Framework, last issued in 2012, sets priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities in England and has been revised to reflect the Government's fire reform programme.

The Home Office will further review and update the National Framework in due course to ensure that recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and the final report of Dame Judith Hackitt's Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety are appropriately reflected.

The revised Framework will:

- outline the role of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service and the National Fire Chiefs Council in England;
- embed the transformation of local governance arrangements where Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners take on responsibility for fire and rescue services; and
- support the ambitious programme for workforce reform including enhancing professional standards, management, leadership, training, equality and diversity.

News story: Parole Board Offices Closed on 27 December

[unable to retrieve full-text content]Due to flooding at 52, Queen Anne’s Gate, the Parole Board offices will be closed on 27 December 2017