

[Statement to Parliament: High Speed Rail \(Preparation\) Act 2013, Annual Expenditure Report for 2016-17](#)

The [High Speed Rail \(Preparation\) Act annual expenditure report](#) is published today under Section 2 of the High Speed Rail (Preparation) Act 2013.

The report covers the period from 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

A copy of the report will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

[Press release: Geovation welcomes a new generation of disruptive property and location data businesses](#)

Geovation has expanded its programme to support three new PropTech start-ups. This is the first time the programme will back PropTech disruptors and follows news that HMLR will begin to collaborate with OS to stimulate the innovative use of land and property technology and data through Geovation.

The PropTech businesses will be joining [the programme](#) alongside three GeoTech start-ups.

Business Minister Lord Prior said:

Building more affordable homes is central to the Government's commitment to creating an economy that works for everyone and the partnership between HM Land Registry and Ordnance Survey is a new and exciting chapter of this.

The Geovation Programme encourages and supports the growing number of new start-ups driving innovation in the housing sector. Geovation is now supporting six new PropTech and GeoTech companies to develop new technologies to propel the UK towards becoming a global leader in the land and property market.

The PropTech businesses are:

[Rentr](#) tracks UK local authority licensing schemes for rental properties, identifying properties that meet regulated safety standards. Landlords and

agents can audit entire portfolios broken down by postcode in seconds and review the daily status changes of individual properties.

[Orbital Witness](#) uses satellite imagery, property ownership data and cutting edge artificial intelligence (AI) to conduct due diligence on properties to assist conveyancers, by highlighting areas of risk early.

[AskPorter](#) is an AI machine learning messaging platform that optimises property and facilities management by reducing administration and management costs while improving customer satisfaction. The platform uses an intuitive conversational interface that enables a chatbot to answer common questions.

The GeoTech businesses are:

[FlowX](#) offers a low-cost solution to traffic congestion, and the pollution this causes, by providing object classification algorithms to exciting sensory data. This is achieved by integrating data from existing infrastructure sensors and then applying machine learning to give the ability to react to congestion before it even happens.

[Safe & the City](#) aims to build a safer community one step at a time by creating a GPS app that uses evidence informed data and crowdsourced geotagged information to paint a picture of safe routes and what streets to walk down.

[Explaain](#) reinvents the online article. Most journalists put the most noteworthy information first and leave context and background for later. Explaain allows journalists to include more of the research that doesn't usually make it into a final article. They recently used their technology to run GE2017.com – a voting preference app that had more than 2 million completed surveys in the run-up to this year's general election. They will be developing location-aware alerts and reminders, and geospatial context for cards.

John Abbott, Director of Digital, Data and Technology at HM Land Registry says:

With our support these start-ups have the opportunity to revolutionise the technology that underpins the property sector and create data-driven services that will make property related transactions simpler, faster and cheaper for everyone.

During the first six months of the programme, participants will develop their ideas to prototype stage. They will benefit from £10,000 of funding and commit to spending twenty hours per week on their project. At this point the prototype will be assessed for its commercial viability. If the Geovation team decides it has viability, the following six months will be spent creating a product and launching it, assisted with a further £10,000 funding.

Alex Wrottesley, Head of Geovation, says:

We're very excited to be working with these businesses. The programme offers an exceptional launchpad for any new business in the PropTech or GeoTech markets and we're looking forward to giving this new group our full support.

[Press release: Car hire sites investigated over hidden charges](#)

The sites are being investigated due to concerns they are breaking consumer law by hitting customers with hidden charges and unexpected fees, such as for fuel, or late night pick-ups and drop-offs.

Over the last year the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has been working with car hire comparison sites to ensure their customers get clear and accurate prices.

As a result of this, there has been a significant improvement in the accuracy and clarity of information on car rental price comparison websites and, today, standards are much higher across much of the sector. For example, most comparison websites now clearly flag young driver surcharges and one-way fees in the prices they quote.

However, a small number of businesses have been identified which may have still not made adequate improvements.

This has resulted in the launch of 2 enforcement cases and prompted the CMA to publish advice to the sector on how to comply with consumer law, issuing letters to 40 companies, asking them to maintain standards and, where necessary, make improvements to comply with the law.

The advice makes clear the CMA's expectations, such as:

- including all extra charges in the price they first give their customers;
- clearly setting out fuel pricing policies to customers; and
- warning them about high excess or deposits amounts.

Today's announcement builds on the CMA's work with the European Commission into 'the big 5' car rental firms in 2015, which resulted in savings of an estimated £100 million for UK customers.

It also follows the CMA's year-long in-depth examination of online comparison tools, which set out clear ground rules for all sites. They should be:

- Clear on key issues such as how they make their money;
- Accurate in the information they provide;

- Responsible about how they use people's personal data; and
- Easy to use.

James MacBeth, Project Director, said:

For many people hiring a car is an essential component to days out, holidays and trips. No one should be misled or face unexpected charges, whether they choose to book directly with the car hire company or through a comparison site.

While we have seen improvements in the way car hire comparison sites quote prices, we are still concerned that some companies may not have faced up to their legal obligations, and as a result we have opened 2 enforcement cases.

We expect this sector to provide clearer information about the true costs, and to explain upfront what customers will actually pay. Businesses must read our advice and make the necessary changes. If companies break the law they risk enforcement action, as these cases show.

People thinking about renting a car overseas should look at [our advice](#) and the [Citizens Advice top tips](#) to help you avoid being caught out when renting a car.

Notes to editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law. For CMA updates, follow us on Twitter [@CMAgovuk](#), [Facebook](#), [Flickr](#) and [LinkedIn](#).
2. The key pieces of consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA's investigation are the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs) and Part 2 of the Consumer Rights Act 2015. The CPRs contain a general prohibition against unfair commercial practices and specific prohibitions against misleading actions, misleading omissions and aggressive commercial practices. Part 2 of the Consumer Rights Act aims to protect consumers against unfair contract terms and notices, and requires contract terms to be fair and transparent.
3. The CMA has not reached a final view on whether the practices it is concerned about breach consumer protection law, and will listen to the companies' responses to its concerns. If necessary the CMA will take action through the courts to enforce that law under Part 8 of the Enterprise Act 2002. Ultimately, only a court can rule that a particular term or practice infringes the law.
4. The CMA will continue to take steps to encourage and maintain compliance with consumer law in this sector. This will include conducting a review in early 2018 with further enforcement cases if necessary. It is also gathering evidence on complaints about problems that people have

experienced overseas (in particular those relating to charges for damage) in order to build on the work we have already done with overseas regulators to tackle problems experienced abroad.

5. Media enquiries to the CMA should be directed to press@cma.gsi.gov.uk or 020 3738 6798.

[News story: Norovirus: all you need to know to prepare](#)

Norovirus is an unpleasant vomiting bug that usually lasts about 2 days. There's not much that can be done to treat it but there are ways to reduce the risk of passing it on to those around you.

It is highly contagious and so it's important to practise good hygiene by thoroughly washing hands with soap and warm water, staying away from places like hospitals and care homes and avoiding preparing food or having close contact with others when ill to limit the spread of norovirus, which causes unpleasant, but short lived, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Nick Phin, National Infection Service Deputy Director, PHE said:

Norovirus can be unpleasant and is easily passed on to those around you. Most people get over it within a day or 2 but, in the very young, elderly or those who have weakened immune systems, it can last longer and it is easy to get dehydrated, so it is important to drink plenty of fluids to prevent this.

It is transmitted by touching hands or surfaces that the virus has landed on. All surfaces should be thoroughly disinfected after any episode of illness.

Those who have diarrhoea and vomiting should not prepare food until 48 hours after symptoms have disappeared. We advise that they should avoid visiting GP surgeries, care homes and hospitals if they have symptoms. If anyone has symptoms and is concerned they should contact NHS 111 or talk to their GP by phone.

One of the best ways to protect against norovirus and to help prevent infection is by practising good hygiene. This includes thorough hand washing with soap and warm water especially after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food.

Symptoms of norovirus include sudden onset of nausea, projectile vomiting, diarrhoea and abdominal pain. Illness typically lasts about 24 to 48 hours.

News story: PM's open letter to EU citizens in the UK

As I travel to Brussels today, I know that many people will be looking to us – the leaders of the 28 nations in the European Union – to demonstrate we are putting people first.

I have been clear throughout this process that citizens' rights are my first priority. And I know my fellow leaders have the same objective: to safeguard the rights of EU nationals living in the UK and UK nationals living in the EU. I want to give reassurance that this issue remains a priority, that we are united on the key principles, and that the focus over the weeks to come will be delivering an agreement that works for people here in the UK, and people in the EU.

When we started this process, some accused us of treating EU nationals as bargaining chips. Nothing could have been further from the truth. EU citizens who have made their lives in the UK have made a huge contribution to our country. And we want them and their families to stay. I couldn't be clearer: EU citizens living lawfully in the UK today will be able to stay.

But this agreement will not only provide certainty about residence, but also healthcare, pensions and other benefits. It will mean that EU citizens who have paid into the UK system – and UK nationals into the system of an EU27 country – can benefit from what they've put in. It will enable families who have built their lives together in the EU and UK to stay together. And it will provide guarantees that the rights of those UK nationals currently living in the EU, and EU citizens currently living in the UK, will not diverge over time.

What that leaves us with is a small number of important points to finalise. That is to be expected at this point in negotiations. We are in touching distance of agreement. I know both sides will consider each other's proposals for finalising the agreement with an open mind. And with flexibility and creativity on both sides, I am confident that we can conclude discussions on citizens' rights in the coming weeks.

I know there is real anxiety about how the agreement will be implemented. People are concerned that the process will be complicated and bureaucratic, and will put up hurdles that are difficult to overcome. I want to provide reassurance here too.

We are developing a streamlined digital process for those applying for settled status in the UK in the future. This process will be designed with users in mind, and we will engage with them every step of the way. We will keep the cost as low as possible – no more than the cost of a UK passport. The criteria applied will be simple, transparent and strictly in accordance

with the Withdrawal Agreement. People applying will not have to account for every trip they have taken in and out of the UK and will no longer have to demonstrate Comprehensive Sickness Insurance as they currently have to under EU rules. And importantly, for any EU citizen who holds Permanent Residence under the old scheme, there will be a simple process put in place to swap their current status for UK settled status.

To keep development of the system on track, the government is also setting up a User Group that will include representatives of EU citizens in the UK, and digital, technical and legal experts. This group will meet regularly, ensuring the process is transparent and responds properly to users' needs. And we recognise that British nationals living in the EU27 will be similarly concerned about potential changes to processes after the UK leaves the EU. We have repeatedly flagged these issues during the negotiations. And we are keen to work closely with EU member states to ensure their processes are equally streamlined.

We want people to stay and we want families to stay together. We hugely value the contributions that EU nationals make to the economic, social and cultural fabric of the UK. And I know that member states value equally UK nationals living in their communities. I hope that these reassurances, alongside those made by both the UK and the European Commission last week, will provide further helpful certainty to the four million people who were understandably anxious about what Brexit would mean for their futures.