

Environment Agency to carry out vital flood prevention work in Matlock

The work to reinstate the flood protection to Matlock will be carried out between 7pm on Tuesday 5 April and 7am on Thursday 7 April. It will involve lifting an additional 100 2-tonne rock filled bags by a large crane situated on the A6 into the River Derwent to reduce erosion and limit damage to an Environment Agency flood wall that sits next to the privately owned wall that has collapsed.

The Environment Agency is working with Derbyshire County Council and Derbyshire Dales District Council to manage the risk of flooding from the River Derwent following the collapse of a privately owned wall behind businesses in Crown Square, Matlock in February this year.

To carry out the work, the A6 will be closed from Matlock Bridge to just before the bus and train station entrance during the times of the main works. Also, traffic from the north and south will be diverted over Matlock Bridge, with traffic lights on Crown Square. While delays are expected, the change will save northbound traffic from a long diversion.

A footpath alongside the River Derwent will also be closed with pedestrians and cyclists being diverted along the A6 pavement.

Before then, a survey team will also be taking measurements to gather valuable ground level data to inform a longer-term engineering solution. Weather conditions permitting, the survey team will be wading in the River Derwent and will be also flying a drone along the river corridor on Monday 4 April.

A spokesperson for the Environment Agency said:

We apologise in advance for any temporary inconvenience caused by these works and thank local businesses, residents and the community for their patience while we undertake these essential flood risk management works.

The rock-filled bags are only a temporary measure and work is currently underway to design a longer-term engineering solution. This will involve drilling 2 boreholes while the temporary works are being carried out, one on either side of the river, to gather important geological information.

While there may be some localised impacts from the borehole drilling and wider construction activity, our contractors will do their best to mitigate any impacts. We also wish to reassure the community that our surveyors will take care to only film the riverside area.

The first stage of work to protect the Environment Agency's flood wall, which sits next to the damaged wall, involved the removal of trees nearest to Matlock Bridge on Thursday 24 March to create a safe working area for contractors to carry out the essential flood prevention work.

Following the collapse of the privately owned wall in February this year, the Environment Agency instructed Jackson Civil Engineering to complete an immediate repair by placing over 50 rock-filled bags in the River Derwent using a large crane situated on the A6. These emergency works were completed within 24 hours of the wall collapsing due to a forecast of further high-water levels on the River Derwent.

DWP proposals to help pension schemes boost investment diversity

The DWP's combined consultation – which runs until 11th May – seeks views on policy proposals and draft regulations designed to make it easier for defined contribution (DC) pension schemes to invest in illiquid assets, if trustees deem it in members' interests.

Illiquid assets – also known as productive finance – include infrastructure and private equity, along with long-term projects that will help move the dial towards a carbon-free economy.

The proposals outlined include requiring DC schemes to “disclose and explain” their policies on illiquid investment and for schemes with over £100 million in assets to disclose their current asset allocation to members.

Providing this information to savers, employers, trustees, and the market at-large will bring greater transparency, consistency and encourage further competition based on overall value.

Minister for Pensions Guy Opperman said:

I am passionate about ensuring pension schemes have the necessary information, and a broad range of options, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the record number of Brits now saving for retirement.

Opening up greater illiquid asset options to DC scheme investment will help do just this and enable schemes – and savers – to benefit from more diversified portfolios, while also bolstering the role pension investments can play on our journey to a carbon-free economy.

The document also provides responses to two recent consultations: the December 2021 charge cap consultation, which sought views on proposals to remove performance fees from the 0.75% limit on charges in default arrangements, along with a summary of the responses the DWP received to last summer's call for evidence on the future of the DC market.

The government plans to engage further with industry and other stakeholders on the charge cap and explore how the feedback received could be addressed in the design of future policy.

Alongside this, the government is also proposing to bring forward legislation this year to reduce burdens and further open up private markets by removing restrictions which currently apply to large authorised Master Trusts.

The proposals would maintain saver protections whilst removing disproportionate red tape and, at the same time, reducing the costs of investment in private equity and debt.

This year will be a landmark year for value for money in DC pensions. It will see them disclosing their investment performance for the very first time, and small DC schemes going through a rigorous assessment to determine whether they offer value to their members.

The measures, along with the combined consultation published today, form part of the DWP's wider ongoing work, in partnership with the Financial Conduct Authority and The Pensions Regulator, to create an effective framework that works across the DC market.

Additional information

- The full combined consultation document "Facilitating investment in illiquid assets" can be found [here](#).
- This combined consultation includes:
 - Response to the 'Enabling Investment in Productive Finance' consultation
 - Consultation on new 'Disclose and Explain' proposals
 - Consultation on draft 'Employer-related investment' regulations
 - Response to the 'Future of the defined contribution market' call for evidence

Media enquiries for this press release – 0115 965 8781

Follow DWP on:

[Changes to COVID-19 testing in England](#)

from 1 April

Symptomatic testing

Symptomatic testing in high-risk settings, where infection can spread rapidly among people who may be at higher risk of serious illness, remains important to ensure that COVID-19 is detected as quickly as possible.

This is to help minimise the number and impact of outbreaks to protect those who are most vulnerable.

Free tests for people who have COVID-19 symptoms will continue to be provided to the following groups, largely via the existing channels:

- NHS patients in hospital, who will be tested via the established NHS testing programme
- those eligible for COVID-19 antiviral and other treatments, who will be sent a pack of tests and can request replacements if they need them
- NHS staff and staff working in NHS-funded independent healthcare provision – the current lateral flow test ordering portal will remain available for this group to order their own tests
- adult social care staff in care homes, homecare organisations, extra care and supported living settings and adult day care centres, as well as residents in care homes and extra care and supported living settings via the established organisation ordering portal
- adult social care social workers, personal assistants, Shared Lives carers and CQC inspectors will be able to order tests from the current online lateral flow ordering system
- staff and patients in hospices will be supplied tests by the hospice
- staff and detainees in prisons and other places of detention will be supplied tests by the detention premises as currently happens
- staff and detainees in immigration removal centres will be supplied tests, as currently happens, by the organisation concerned
- staff and users of high-risk domestic abuse refuges and homelessness settings

Asymptomatic testing

During periods of high prevalence, asymptomatic testing will continue to mitigate risk. Testing will continue to be provided for:

- adult social care staff and a small number of visitors providing personal care
- hospice staff
- patient-facing staff in the NHS and NHS-funded independent healthcare provision
- some staff in prisons and other places of detention, and some refuges and shelters

Care home outbreak testing for all staff and residents will also continue all year.

Full guidance will be published shortly setting out how the current testing regimes will change to reflect the [Living with COVID-19 strategy](#), which will include specific guidance for high-risk settings.

Visitors to high-risk settings

Most visitors to adult social care settings, the NHS, hospices, prisons or places of detention will no longer require a test.

Tests will continue to be provided to a small number of visitors to care homes and hospices who will be providing personal care.

Visits by people with symptoms may still be allowed in exceptional circumstances, such as end of life visits. Please contact someone responsible at the setting prior to visiting in these circumstances.

If you wish to test yourself, lateral flow tests will continue to be available to buy from pharmacies and supermarkets, including online.

It is vital that everyone continues to follow the [simple steps to keep themselves and others safe](#).

Changes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

The devolved governments have set out their own plans:

The government will continue to work together with our partners to keep all of these measures under review.

If you do not fall into the categories listed here but you wish to test yourself for COVID-19, lateral flow tests will continue to be available to buy from pharmacies and supermarkets, including online.

[Director of Blackburn automotive business banned for 8 years](#)

Anthony Stephen Miller, 48, from Blackburn was director of Millers Commercial Refinishers Ltd which traded from July 2017 until early 2020 after which it went into liquidation in June 2020.

Millers Commercial Refinishers was an automotive business based at Great Harwood near Blackburn. It provided a body repair service for vehicles damaged in accidents.

The company had ceased trading in early 2020 and Miller, having already informed third parties that the company would be put into liquidation, approached an Insolvency Practitioner in February 2020.

When the company did eventually go into liquidation in June 2020, the company liquidators referred the case to the Insolvency Service.

The subsequent investigation by the Insolvency Service found that the company had applied for and received a £50,000 Bounce Back Loan, despite it being clear that companies that had already ceased trading were not eligible for the loans, which were intended to support genuine companies during the pandemic lockdown.

Miller transferred nearly £30,000 of the loan out of the company's account to a connected company, despite owing HMRC at least £30,486 in unpaid VAT, PAYE and other charges at the point Millers Commercial Refinishers went into liquidation.

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy accepted a disqualification undertaking from Miller, which begins on 22 February 2022 and lasts for eight years.

The disqualification undertaking prevents Miller from directly or indirectly becoming involved in the promotion, formation or management of a company without the permission of the court.

Rob Clarke, Chief Investigator at the Insolvency Service said:

Bounce Back Loans were made available for trading companies adversely affected by the pandemic. Anthony Miller knew his company had ceased trading yet he took it anyway.

We will not hesitate to take action against directors who have abused Covid-19 financial support like this, and his lengthy ban should serve as a warning to others.

Notes to editors

Anthony Stephen Miller is of Blackburn and his date of birth is December 1973.

Millers Commercial Refinishers Ltd (Company Reg no. 10574101).

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings.

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of restrictions](#).

[Information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct.](#)

Contact Press Office

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Foreign Secretary supports the withdrawal of serving UK judges from the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal](#)

- Foreign Secretary reached this conclusion following consultation with the President of the UK Supreme Court and the Deputy Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor.

The Foreign Secretary supports the withdrawal of serving UK judges from the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal. Following discussions with the Deputy Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor and the President of the Supreme Court, it was agreed that it is no longer tenable for serving UK judges to sit on Hong Kong's top court.

British judges have played an important role in supporting the judiciary in Hong Kong for many years. However, since the imposition of the National Security Law in 2020, China has continued to use this legislation to undermine the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong.

These rights and freedoms were set out in the Joint Declaration agreed between the UK and China in 1984. China's actions include restrictions on freedom of expression, the stifling of opposition voices, and the criminalising of dissent.

The National Security Law also violates the high degree of autonomy of executive and legislative powers and independent judicial authority, provided for in the Joint Declaration.

The UK Supreme Court has continued to assess the situation in Hong Kong carefully in consultation with the UK Government. As National Security Law cases proceed through the Courts – and we see the far-reaching chilling effect of the legislation – it has become increasingly untenable for the UK Government to endorse UK serving judges sitting on the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

We have seen a systematic erosion of liberty and democracy in Hong Kong. Since the National Security Law was imposed, authorities have cracked down on free speech, the free press and free association.

The situation has reached a tipping point where it is no longer tenable for British judges to sit on Hong Kong's leading court, and would risk legitimising oppression.

I welcome and wholeheartedly support the decision to withdraw British judges from the court.

Deputy Prime Minister, Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor, Dominic Raab, said:

Since 2020 and the introduction of the national security law, our assessment of the situation in Hong Kong is that it has shifted too far from the freedoms that we hold dear – making free expression and honest critique of the state a criminal offence.

This flies in the face of the handover agreement we have had with China since 1997 and, having discussed at length with Foreign Secretary and the President of the Supreme Court, we regretfully agree that it is no longer appropriate for serving UK judges to continue sitting in Hong Kong courts.

I thank our judges for being a bastion of international rule of law in Hong Kong over the past 25 years.

Background

- High profile cases proceeding through Hong Kong's Courts include those of key pro-democracy activists such as Jimmy Lai, Andy Li and the NSL 47.