

Tree-planting event celebrates reedbed scheme at Devon beauty spot

The sustainable scheme, which has delivered an impressive 3,800 square metres of reeds at the park just off the A38 is the result of a ground-breaking partnership project between Highways England, Stover Country Park and Devon County Council. Natural England also supported the work.

The reeds act as a filter capturing and filtering water run-off from the A38 and Drumbridges roundabout before it enters the lake. Water can carry pollutants such as oil and metal residue into the lake and this has contributed to the poor water quality and reduced diversity of wildlife in the lake.

The reeds have been planted upstream of the lake to act as a natural barrier and filter pollutants. They will also provide valuable habitat for a range of wildlife. At the same time, the park, which is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), will be improving sustainable drainage at the site. Planting was completed in April and already many areas of reeds have reached a height of 30cm.

Councillor Mathews, Tina Barrington, Designated Funds Environmental Lead for Highways England, Mark Rands of South West Highways and Kier's David Olorenshaw.

Highways England Project Manager Darren Painter said:

Our designated funds programme was developed so that we can invest in projects beyond our traditional road build and maintenance, and this is a glowing example of how this funding can have a positive impact on people and communities.

Working with our partners on such a great environmental scheme has been a real pleasure and we're delighted that the reeds have established so well. The reeds are currently establishing their root systems and we anticipate a full bed of green reeds in the next two years.

The twin reedbed system starts by providing a physical barrier to silted and polluted water, then chemical and biological mechanisms work in combination to break down even more pollutants resulting in clearer water which will help the lake to regenerate and flourish.

It is hoped that by reducing the silt deposits and contamination, white-water lilies, not seen at the lake since 2007, will once again start to cover the lake surface, providing suitable habitat for a variety of dragonflies and

damselflies.

The reedbeds themselves will also support a range of birds, insects, reptiles, amphibians and mammals such as water rail, hairy dragonfly, grass snake, Daubenton's bat and otter.

Rob Ballard, Ranger at Stover Country Park, said:

We are very pleased with how the sustainable drainage system has been developed. Everyone involved took on board the importance of developing a functional system that also enhances the ecological value of the park.

The system is an incredible asset; species such as Emperor and Common Darter dragonflies, heron, kingfisher and roe deer have already been seen in the reedbed ponds and surrounding areas.

Re-establishment of the species rich grassland is under way with various wildflowers such as Purple Loosestrife and Bird's-foot Trefoil colonising, among others.

Initial water sampling indicates the system is already having an effect by improving the quality of water entering the Lake. As the reeds develop and establish we should see a marked difference in both water quality and species diversity in the park.

Councillor Roger Croad, Devon County Council Cabinet Member with responsibility for Environmental Services, added:

We're proud to have played a part in this important project which will protect the rich biodiversity that we're fortunate to have at Stover Country Park.

The completed scheme is incredibly impressive – and will make a huge difference to the water quality in the lake. As a SSSI and designated as an official "Dragonfly Hotspot" by the British Dragonfly Society, wildlife can thrive at the Country Park with the help of ecological schemes like this.

Work at the site started in late November 2018 and was completed at the end of June. To create the reed bed, 6,000 tonnes of soil was removed and four varieties of reed native to the area were planted.

Devon County Council Chairman John Mathews and Michael Whitehead, Principal Environment Advisor for Highways England.

The reedbed was officially opened by Devon County Council Chairman John Mathews and Michael Whitehead, Principal Environment Advisor for Highways

England, at a ribbon-cutting event, and this was followed by the planting of four oak trees by Councillor Mathews, Tina Barrington, Designated Funds Environmental Lead for Highways England, Mark Rands of South West Highways and Kier's David Olorenshaw.

Highways England is committed to a national Biodiversity Plan which is being supported by a national investment programme over the next five years.

The plan recognises road verges and associated land can be managed to provide areas of habitat, relatively free from human access, that may be scarce in the surrounding landscape.

These road verges can also be used to connect fragmented habitats in the wider landscape, enabling plant and animal populations to move and interact, and so become stronger and more resilient.

The Government allocated £675 million of funds to Highways England over a five-year spending period covering 2015 to 2020 – a series of ring-fenced funds designated to address a range of issues including Environment, Cycling, Safety and Integration, Air Quality and Innovation.

The Highways England Environmental Designated Fund of £225m has been set up to improve the environmental performance of the Strategic Road Network. It is to be used for projects that are 'beyond business as usual' which will help achieve benefits for one, or preferably a combination of areas including: cultural heritage, biodiversity, landscape, flooding and water quality, carbon emissions and noise pollution.

Elsewhere in the South West, designated funding is also helping Highways England to support Stroud District Canal and the Cotswold Canal Trust in a £4 million project to restore a section of the Cotswold Canal near M5 junction 13, assisting Cornwall Council to deliver a number of cycling, habitat and heritage projects alongside the A30 and supporting Sustrans to deliver a number of cycling initiatives around the new M49 junction scheme at Avonmouth, as well as funding a cultural heritage project to enhance the historic Stoke Park landscape alongside the M32 in Bristol.

For more information please visit the Highways England [Designated Funds](#) page.

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.

Scottish Secretary responds to Supreme Court judgement



The UK Supreme Court (photo credit UK Supreme Court)

Mr Jack said:

“As the Prime Minister has made clear, we will respect the Supreme Court’s judgment, but we respectfully disagree with the decision of the Court. The UK Government wants a Queen’s Speech to set out its plans on a wide range of domestic issues. We remain determined to honour the result of the EU Referendum and deliver Brexit on 31 October. The Prime Minister is focused on getting a deal at the EU Council next month.”

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Man overboard rescued off Dover ‘was wearing lifejacket with good strobe light’



The alarm was raised through a mayday to HM Coastguard just after 3am on 24th September from the 16m vessel. gale force winds – southerly force 7 – in the area made it a challenging rescue.

Dungeness RNLI lifeboat and the HM Coastguard search and rescue helicopter from Lydd were sent and the man was rescued from the water by the crew just before 3.50am. He was taken to Ashford hospital for treatment.

James Crane, senior maritime operation officer with HM Coastguard said: 'There is no doubt that in these dreadful weather conditions, this man's rescue was made more straightforward because he was wearing a life jacket, which was inflated, and the strobe light was in a good working condition making him very visible in the water.'

'It meant the helicopter crew could see him while they were on their way to the search area.'

The boat is currently under tow by Dungeness lifeboat along with Dover RNLI lifeboat back to Dover harbour with a fouled propeller from the perry rescue line the skipper attempted to throw to the crewman when he went overboard. An attempt to launch its tender to assist the man overboard was also made but the weather conditions swept it away and this has been lost.

James added: 'The skipper also did everything right including contacting us as soon as his crew mate had gone overboard.'

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Thomas Cook

I am today (25 September 2019) updating the House at the earliest opportunity on the [action the government is taking to support those affected by the collapse of Thomas Cook](#), in particular the 150,000 passengers left abroad without a flight back to the UK and the 9,000 people who have lost their jobs in the UK. This situation is deeply regrettable. All parties considered options to avoid the collapse of the company. Ultimately, however, Thomas Cook's directors took the decision to place it into liquidation and it ceased trading at around 2am on Monday 23 September.

It is normal practice, when a government department proposes to undertake a contingent liability in excess of £300,000 for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the minister concerned:

- to present a departmental minute to parliament, giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances: and
- to refrain from incurring the liability until 14 parliamentary sitting

days after the issue of the minute, except in the cases of special urgency.

I am making this statement to provide the House with retrospective notice of 2 contingent liabilities (both uncapped) created by my department in responding to the collapse of Thomas Cook:

- providing an indemnity created by an agreement with the CAA, under Section 16 of the Civil Aviation Act (1982), for the repatriation of non-ATOL-protected Thomas Cook passengers (the CAA Indemnity); and
- providing an indemnity to the Official Receiver (OR), in his capacity as liquidator of the failed Thomas Cook companies (in liquidation) (the OR Indemnity).

In both cases, I was unable to refrain from incurring the liabilities, or to provide the normal 14 sitting days' advance notice, due to the rapid development of the situation in the days leading up to Thomas Cook's insolvency, which occurred while the House was not sitting, and the special urgency that resulted. The terms of the contingent liabilities were also commercially sensitive at the point they were created.

The CAA Indemnity is identical to that provided in relation to the Monarch repatriation exercise in October 2017. The indemnity could be called, in respect of any claim against the CAA if there is a successful legal challenge relating to the repatriation requiring damages to be paid.

The Official Receiver (OR) was appointed liquidator of the Thomas Cook companies on Monday 23 September 2019. The OR Indemnity has 2 elements and is based on the precedent of the indemnity provided by the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy to the OR following the insolvency of British Steel in May 2019:

- an indemnity to meet any shortfall in the OR's costs that cannot be covered by the realisation of the assets of the Thomas Cook companies. This would include any unexpected costs arising from a services agreement which the CAA has entered into with the Thomas Cook companies (in liquidation) to keep some key elements of Thomas Cook running to facilitate a smooth repatriation of UK passengers (eg key IT systems containing passenger information and flight booking details). Without this indemnity the OR would not have taken the appointment. This approach is playing an important role in achieving a smooth repatriation of all UK passengers who were overseas at the time of Thomas Cook's insolvency. In the absence of the services agreement there would have been a markedly higher risk of Thomas Cook being immediately wound up. This would have had the effect of creating an extremely disjointed insolvency process, with CAA having no meaningful ability to plan or control the provision of repatriation flights, and no means of informing affected passengers about their new flight arrangements.
- the OR also requested, and with my authorisation was provided with, an

indemnity against any liabilities arising from any claims brought against him as liquidator. This is reasonable in the case of the OR, who although an office-holder, is acting in his personal capacity and, in this case, was being asked to do something which would not normally be done in a liquidation, namely to maintain part of the Thomas Cook companies running to provide services to the CAA, which is crucial to the repatriation exercise.

Authority for any expenditure required under both liabilities will be sought through the normal supply procedure. HM Treasury has approved the proposal in principle including conditions to require both CAA and OR to demonstrate reasonable endeavours in their actions.

UN Human Rights Council 42 – Interactive Dialogue with the UN High Commissioner on Cambodia

The United Kingdom thanks the Special Rapporteur for her report.

The UK is deeply concerned at the human rights situation in Cambodia. We share the Special Rapporteur's concerns about the severe regression of political rights and freedoms marked by the continued lack of a credible opposition following the dissolution of the Cambodia National Rescue Party in 2017 and the ban on the majority of CNRP officials from political activity. We urge the Government to enable credible multi-party democracy and free debate.

We urge the Government to ensure that opposition and civil society voices are heard and given a meaningful role in policy making. The transfer of former opposition leader Kem Sokha to his family home was a move in the right direction, but he still remains in detention. We urge the Government to drop all charges against him, and to take the necessary further steps to ensure the widening of political participation.

We echo the Special Rapporteur's recommendations that the political culture should focus on issues rather than persons, and regarding the need for stronger judicial protection of the freedoms of assembly and expression. We urge the government to explore ways in which the international community can support the implementation of the Special Rapporteur's recommendations.

Mr President,

Whilst we acknowledge the small steps taken by the Cambodian Government since the 2018 election, we would welcome the Special Rapporteur's views on what

further steps she believes the government is willing to take to ensure greater, and fairer, political participation in Cambodia.