

Press release: Government acts to make 'upskirting' a specific offence

- Government moves to make 'upskirting' a specific criminal offence
- Worst perpetrators set to face two years in prison
- Ministers demand the most serious offenders are placed on the sex offenders register

'Upskirting' is set to become a specific criminal offence, with perpetrators facing up to two years behind bars, under a new law backed by Government.

The highly intrusive practice – colloquially known as 'upskirting' – typically involves offenders taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks.

Currently, this behaviour is being successfully prosecuted under the offence of Outraging Public Decency. However, ministers have decided to act after concerns were raised that potentially not all instances of 'upskirting' are covered by existing criminal law.

In April, the Justice Secretary David Gauke committed to ensuring the law was fit for purpose. Today, ministers have confirmed that the Government will support legislation to close any potential loopholes, in order to better protect victims and increase convictions.

Justice Minister Lucy Frazer said:

This behaviour is a hideous invasion of privacy which leaves victims feeling degraded and distressed.

By making 'upskirting' a specific offence, we are sending a clear message that this behaviour will not be tolerated, and that perpetrators will be properly punished.

I'd like to thank Wera Hobhouse, Gina Martin, and all other campaigners for their tireless work, and look forward to seeing the Bill progress through Parliament.

The measures were introduced in a Private Member's Bill (PMB) by Wera Hobhouse MP. The Bill will receive its 2nd reading in the House of Commons today (15th June).

In recent years the Government has made tackling sexual abuse and sexual violence a priority, and keeps laws in this area under constant review. After listening carefully to the concerns of victims, stakeholders, and MPs from across the House, Ministers have decided a change in the law is necessary.

Wera Hobhouse MP said:

I got involved in politics to change things that my constituents and I care about. I am incredibly grateful to Gina Martin for starting this campaign, and for giving me the opportunity – in my first year in parliament – to do exactly that.

The fact that the government have listened to our calls is testament to the widespread consensus that there was a gap in the law that needed to be addressed. By working with Gina and Ministers on the detail of my bill, we have demonstrated when we work together successfully we can make a difference on issues that really matter to people.

We all made the case for common sense. Now if someone is to fall victim to upskirting, the law will recognise them as the victim, and the police will be able to act immediately and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Gina Martin said:

Almost a year ago, I started my campaign to make upskirting a sexual offence after I was targeted. I've been on an extraordinary journey since then. The inner workings of politics was a mystery to me, so I brought in my lawyer Ryan Whelan to help me create an argument that was legally sound and politically astute.

And now, the result of all that hard work is that women and girls who needed this law changed are now being heard by those in power. This has been a colossal undertaking for me personally and professionally, and I absolutely couldn't have done it without Ryan and the incredible public behind me.

The new law would bring the punishment for 'upskirting' in line with other existing voyeurism offences, and the changes will see offenders face a maximum of two years in prison. The Government will now work with Wera Hobhouse and others to bring these measures through, with Ministers planning to ensure crucial amendments are made to the Bill. The most notable of these amendments includes placing the most serious offenders on the sex offenders register.

Katie Ghose, Chief Executive of Women's Aid, said:

We welcome the government taking decisive action to make upskirting a criminal offence. This form of abuse is painful and humiliating for victims and often has a devastating impact on all aspects of their lives.

We hope that this new criminal offence will be another step forward in challenging the prevailing sexist attitudes and behaviours in our society that underpin violence against women and girls. Domestic abuse does not happen in a cultural vacuum.

By condemning this form of abuse, we can send out the powerful message that upskirting is unacceptable and perpetrators of this crime will be held to account.

Lisa Hallgarten, Head of Policy & Public Affairs for Brook, says:

Brook welcomes the Government's recognition of the seriousness of upskirting as a move towards tackling the widespread incidence of sexual harassment of women and girls.

However, we know that the law alone is not enough and schools have a critical role in challenging harmful behaviours and practices by dealing with any issues promptly and in line with robust PSHE and safeguarding policies.

In order to keep children and young people safe from harm we must teach them at the earliest opportunity to respect each others' privacy, to know their rights, and to understand issues around consent, coercion, and unwanted/unsafe touch.

Notes to editors

- Currently, 'upskirting' does not go unpunished in England and Wales, and there have been successful prosecutions under the Outraging Public Decency (OPD) offence. Recent examples of successful prosecutions for 'upskirting' under OPD include someone who was convicted in January for taking photos up women's skirts on trains, on a beach and at work, and a student who was convicted in March for taking photos up women's skirts in Oxford.
- However, existing criminal law does not necessarily cover every instance of 'upskirting.' Creating a specific 'upskirting' offence would strengthen the law in this area, as it doesn't have the same limitations as existing offences. It would also allow this intrusive behaviour to be treated as a sexual offence and, with Government amendments, ensure that the most serious offenders are made subject to notification requirements (commonly referred to as the 'sex offenders register').
- The PMB would insert a new offence under Section 67 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. The changes will cover England and Wales; 'upskirting' is already a specific offence in Scotland.
- It would capture instances where the purpose is to obtain sexual gratification or cause humiliation, distress or alarm.
- A summary conviction would carry a sentence of up to one year in prison and/or a fine. And a more serious offence, tried in the Crown Court, would carry a sentence of up to two years in prison.

- The Bill returns to Parliament for its 2nd reading on 15 June where the Government will formally give its support.
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Speech: Encouraging an Integrated Approach to Address Underlying Causes of Instability in Mali and the Sahel

Thank you Mr President. And I would like to thank Under Secretary-General Lacroix for his briefing and welcome His Excellency Mr Coulibaly to the Council.

The United Kingdom continues to support MINUSMA. We recognise the challenging circumstances in which its military and civilian personnel operate and we unequivocally condemn the recent attacks against MINUSMA personnel. MINUSMA must receive the tools it needs to protect its personnel adequately.

At the same time, we applaud the positive impact MINUSMA has had, particularly in supporting the recent progress on the Peace Agreement, ahead of the upcoming elections.

Mr President, as the Secretary-General made clear in his recent report, the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation in Mali is greatly concerning. During the June to August lean season this year, more than 4.3 million people will require humanitarian assistance. This is over a quarter of the population.

The United Kingdom is one of the larger humanitarian donors to the Sahel region. Between 2015 and 2018, we will have provided over \$250 million of humanitarian aid with a further \$67 million of assistance to the region in 2018. And the international community and Malian government must fulfil their humanitarian pledges and commitments in light of the impending crisis.

Mr President, political stability is crucial to address the root causes of the situation in Mali. In this regard, the United Kingdom welcomes the recent positive steps taken by the parties towards implementation of some of the key provisions of the Peace Agreement and the Prime Minister's support to implement the Agreement ahead of the upcoming elections. And I agree with distinguished representative of France on the key concrete next steps that we need to see.

Honourable Foreign Minister, this Council has become increasingly concerned by the pace, the slow pace, of implementation of the Peace Agreement at a time when MINUSMA troops are paying the price with their lives in unacceptable numbers. I understand that elections are underway, but I would urge you in the most respectful and friendly way, to take back to all parties

to the Peace Agreement and to the presidential candidates the expectation of this Council for fast and deep implementation of the Agreement. Patience is running out.

It is also important that the key constituencies of Malian society, including women, play a central role in the implementation of the Peace Agreement and beyond. As we all know, an inclusive Peace Agreement is much more likely to succeed. We hope the Malian government will observe the target it set for itself, in its law of 2015, for a 30% minimum representation for women in elected and nominated positions.

The upcoming elections, if they are credible, free and fair, present an opportunity for Malians to express their democratic rights and commitments. Above all, these elections should not be subject of violence. We call for calm from all parties at this time and for MINUSMA to support dialogue between the parties throughout the upcoming electoral cycles.

The United Kingdom is concerned by recent reports of human rights abuses in Mali, and particularly those allegedly committed by the armed forces. A failure to protect civilians would erode trust in the Government and feed extremist recruitment narratives. We call upon all parties to comply with their obligations and put an end to violations and abuses.

Mr President, as we begin negotiations on MINUSMA's mandate renewal, I again underline the United Kingdom's strong support for the mission. It is important that we address the recommendations from the strategic review through this process to continue to improve MINUSMA's effectiveness on the ground. This includes further development of a long-term strategy for MINUSMA, a clear prioritisation of tasks, and recognition that other actors, including the UN Country Team, may be better placed to deliver results.

Whilst we recognise the logic of consolidating MINUSMA's presence, we believe that maintaining the current geographical focus is important for the implementation of the Peace Agreement and the long-term stabilisation of the country.

Finally, it is essential that all actors across Mali and the Sahel take a coordinated and integrated approach, in line with the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. A solution which addresses the underlying causes of instability is the only way to ensure long-term security in the region. The ultimate solution will be a political one, underpinned by effective security and economic development. It must be inclusive, gender-responsive and ensure the full and equal participation of the whole of society, including particularly women, to succeed. It must provide economic opportunities and present an attractive alternative to violence and extremism. This is the best way to improve the lives of those who live in Mali and the best way to improve our collective peace and security.

Thank you Mr President.

[Statement to Parliament: Automated and Electric Vehicles Bill: updated analysis of amendments made in the House of Lords for the purposes of English Votes for English Laws](#)

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[Speech: EU Transport Council 7 June 2018](#)

I attended the only formal Transport Council under the Bulgarian Presidency (the Presidency) in Luxembourg on Thursday 7th June.

The Council reached a general approach on a proposal to revise the current Regulation on safeguarding connectivity and competition in international air transport, which is intended to provide protection against subsidisation and unfair pricing practices in the supply of air services from non-EU countries. During the discussion, I emphasised the importance of connectivity, consumer choice and avoiding market distortions.

Following this, the Council adopted the Presidency's proposal for a general approach on the directive on port reception facilities. I supported the aim to further protect the marine environment against illegal discharges of waste from ships and to ensure the efficiency of maritime operation in ports, and recognised that concerns raised by the UK had been addressed.

Next, the Presidency presented a progress report on the revised rail passengers' rights and obligations regulation, which was noted by the

Council.

Following this, the Council considered a number of files in phase one of the mobility package (published in May 2017). Firstly, the Presidency concluded that the Council had reached a general approach on the compromise proposal on the revised European electronic road tolling services ('EETS') directive, on which I voiced my support. Next, when considering the proposed directive on hired goods vehicles, the Presidency observed it did not have sufficient support for a general approach and concluded that the Council was unable to adopt the proposal. In the discussion, I noted that the UK supported the general approach, but acknowledged that other member states wanted further discussion.

Over lunch, ministers discussed the financing of infrastructure projects in the EU and connectivity in the Western Balkans.

Following this, the Presidency presented progress reports on the remaining elements of phase one of the mobility package, covering proposals designed to improve the clarity and enforcement of the EU road transport market (the 'market pillar'), and proposals on the application of social legislation in road transport (the 'social pillar'). I outlined the outstanding areas of concern for the UK and committed to working constructively toward a general approach and deal moving forward.

Next, the Presidency presented 2 progress reports on proposals from phase two of the mobility package (published November 2017). The Presidency provided updates on the proposal to amend the current combined transport directive, which aims to encourage and facilitate modal shift away from the roads and onto alternative means of transport, and to reduce congestion, and the clean and energy-efficient vehicles directive.

Under any other business, several items were discussed. Notably, Commissioner Bulc presented the third and final mobility package proposals, which focused on safety and technology in transport. Commissioner Bulc also presented an action plan on military mobility; in reply to Luxembourg, she confirmed that a range of actions were being pursued under the EU cycling strategy and, in reply to Finland, set out plans for an upcoming public consultation on summertime arrangements. Furthermore, Sweden noted the 18 to 19 June summit on connected and autonomous vehicles in Gothenburg; and Austria presented transport plans for its incoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Regarding bilateral engagement, I met with Commissioner Bulc and my ministerial counterparts from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Malta, Poland and Romania.

World news story: Bids open for projects to tackle the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT)

- The IWT CHALLENGE FUND aims to help developing countries by reducing demand, strengthening enforcement and improving criminal justice, and providing alternative livelihoods. The deadline for Stage 1 applications is Thursday 10 July. Information on how to apply can be found [here](#).
- The DARWIN INITIATIVE – a programme funded by the UK's Department of Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) aims to protect biodiversity and the natural environment in developing countries. The deadline for Stage 1 applications is Tuesday 24 July. Information on how to apply can be found [here](#).

The British Embassy strongly encourages environmental and conservation organisations working in Guatemala and/or Honduras to apply. According to official statistics species such as exotic birds (macaws), reptiles (iguanas), and mammals are seeing their numbers rapidly decline as a direct consequence of IWT.

To address this issue the United Kingdom aims to build coalitions by engaging with the private sector, NGOs and academia. We also believe it is important to harness technology and innovation, and ultimately to close markets for illegally traded wildlife products. Project proposals may draw on any of these objectives.