

Is there any such thing as a pure nationalised service?

On Friday 27th April at 11 am in the Old Library at All Souls College, High Street Oxford I am giving an open lecture to answer this question.

I will examine the different ways the public and private sectors work together to deliver public services, and offer a new way of analysing services for their public and private sector components.

I will remind the audience that most of the UK railway is provided by the public sector, and a lot of our current health care both within and outside the NHS is delivered by the private sector. People value the free at the point of need main proposition of the NHS but worry less about who provided what within that. They accept drugs supplied by for profit companies retailed by private pharmacies and often prescribed by GPs working as independent contractors to the NHS. I will conclude that there is no such thing as a purely public sector service in a mixed economy like the UK, and argue that a lot of what the private sector does is also public service.

News story: British Army's rifle set for multi-million-pound upgrade

The SA80 A2 hand held assault weapon will be upgraded into the A3 model under the Mid Life Improvement (MLI) project, which will ensure the rifle has the enhancements needed to remain in service until 2025 and beyond.

An initial investment of £5.4 million for the project, which will be carried out by Heckler and Koch, will help sustain around 20 highly skilled jobs at the Nottingham Small Arms Factory owned by the company.

Defence Minister Guto Bebb said:

This multi-million-pound upgrade will give our Army a lighter, more hardwearing, better-camouflaged combat rifle so our soldiers can perform on the frontline of some of the most dangerous locations across the world. This investment is also a boost to Nottingham's highly-skilled gun-makers who proudly support our troops in their task to protect our country in the face of intensifying threats.

The changes to the rifle include:

- A more durable hardwearing coating in a “Flat Dark Earth” colour offering better camouflage in a range of environments.
- The A3 is 100g lighter than the A2 and has a more streamlined fore grip making the weapon easier to handle.
- The A3 rifle has a bracket to secure new innovative low light sights which can clip on or in front of the day sight without the need to remove it. These sights are smaller, lighter and require fewer batteries whilst operating just as effectively in low light/night conditions.

Director Land Equipment at the MOD’s Defence Equipment and Support organisation, Major General Colin McClean said:

The SA80 is a battle proven weapon used by the UK Armed Forces on operations all over the world. The upgrade will build upon the rifle’s state-of-the-art features enhancing accuracy and consistency. The Mid Life Improvement project will ensure that our troops have the right equipment at the right time.

The MLI project will see 5,000 weapons upgraded initially with the intent to upgrade more weapons in the future. The fielding of the first tranche began in February.

Contractor fined after a series of failures to carry out work safely and provide adequate welfare facilities

A contractor carrying out refurbishment and basement extension work was prosecuted after the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) identified a series of serious safety breaches during inspections.

Westminster Magistrates’ Court heard that PVAD Limited was the contractor controlling work at a construction site at on Montholme Road, London, SW11, when it was inspected by the HSE in March 2017. The inspection found that numerous areas of the site had no edge protection to prevent falls, including where workers could fall four metres into the basement from the site entrance area. Unsafe ‘homemade’ ramps were being used to allow access to some parts of the site.

It was also found that the welfare facilities fell far below the legally required standard, with the WC having no cistern to allow flushing and the washing arrangements on site consisting of a cold water outdoor tap and bucket, with no soap or towel.

A prohibition notice was served on PVAD Limited, but further inspections in April and May 2017 found new work at height issues that were so serious that all work had to be halted on both occasions until the site was made safe. An improvement notice was also served requiring PVAD Limited concerning the inadequate welfare facilities. The company breached the notice as the improvements made were insufficient.

The HSE had previously inspected other PVAD Limited sites several times in 2015 and 2016. As a result, the company had been served with three improvement notices relating to welfare facilities and two formal letters highlighting work at height risks and giving advice.

PVAD Limited of Overstone Road, Hammersmith pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 6(3) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005, Regulation 15(11) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM) and Section 33(1)(g) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The company was fined £51,334 and ordered to pay £1,525.50 in costs.

HSE inspector Adam Thompson commented after the hearing:

“After the March 2017 inspection PVAD Limited were provided with clear written advice to help them make improvements. They failed to take note of this and continued to rely on a site manager with no formal health and safety training.

“On the three occasions the site was visited the workers were at such risk of falling that all work had to halt. It was just good fortune that no one was killed or seriously injured at the site”.

“The standards were particularly inexcusable as the company had received clear warnings in the past. It speaks volumes that, even after being issued with three welfare improvement notices at other sites, they provided their workers at the new site with a non-flushing WC and an outside cold water tap and a bucket as washing facilities”.

Notes to editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. www.hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

Building contractor jailed after house collapse in Brighton

A building contractor has been sentenced following an incident in February 2015 in which a house in Brighton partially collapsed.

Hove Crown Court heard how builder Glen Peters (trading as Brow Builders) undermined the structural integrity of the house by digging out the basement. He then failed to act on the advice of a structural engineer on how to remedy the situation, resulting in the gable wall partially collapsing and the ground floor collapsing into the basement. Adjacent properties had to be evacuated and the area cordoned off because there were concerns that members of the public living nearby and passing through the area were at risk.

An investigation carried out by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that the property had bungeroosh walls, common to buildings in the Brighton area which were built in the mid-18th to 19th century. They are constructed with a mixture of rubble, timber, pebbles, stones and flint in a lime mix mortar set between shuttering. The make-up of these walls makes working on this type of building more challenging in terms of structural stability, meaning that those doing so must fully understand what they are dealing with.

The investigation also found that Glen Peters failed to report the incident to HSE as a dangerous occurrence in accordance with the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 2013.

Glen Peters (trading as Brow Builders) of Woodingdean, Brighton, pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 25(1) of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 and Regulation 7 of the RIDDOR Regulations 2013. The defendant was sentenced to five months imprisonment for count one and two months imprisonment for count two to run concurrently. He was also ordered to pay costs of £7,000.

HSE principal inspector Emma Stiles said "Basement work must be properly planned to ensure the structural integrity of the building throughout the construction work. When this type of work is done badly, workers and members of public are at significant risk of serious injury or death. In addition, we cannot underestimate the impact on the homeowners when their properties are extensively damaged."

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Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.

Press release: New figures reveal 1 in 11 anglers are junior anglers

Fishing licence sales show a huge increase in popularity among children with 1 in 11 anglers being juniors according to new figures released by the Environment Agency today.

The introduction of free fishing licences for children in 2017 has led to a 53% increase with more than 79,000 junior licences issued last year.

The figures were welcomed by the agency in light of challenges in attracting juniors to the sport given the popularity of game consoles, TV and social media.

Kevin Austin, Head of Fisheries at the Environment Agency, said:

While today's figures are welcomed and encouraging, we mustn't rest on our laurels. Today's children are the anglers of tomorrow and it's important we attract them to the sport early. We're really pleased to see that a growing number of young people are taking up the offer of a free junior licence, helping them to enjoy the great outdoors and this great sport.

Children today have a wealth of technology at their fingertips, and coupled with the costs parents face, it's easy to see why fewer children are enjoying outdoor activities. Through our continued investment into fishing, our aim is to ensure the sport continues for generations to come.

From April, the age of free junior licences change from 12-16 to 13-16. Junior fishing licence work will continue to be supported by Environment Agency partners such as Angling Trust, Get Hooked on Fishing and National Fishing Month. Those under thirteen will not be required to purchase a licence.

All fishing licence income is used to fund work to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries. The Environment Agency works in partnership with the Angling Trust, Get Hooked on Fishing and National Fishing Month to offer free

fishing events and activities.

To find an event close to you take a look at get fishing. To buy a licence online visit: www.gov.uk/get-a-fishing-licence

Notes to editor

- Figures quoted are for England and Wales
- Juniors still need to get a licence in order to fish but the licence will be free at get a fishing licence.
- These changes have also been implemented across Wales. Natural Resources Wales is the lead.

1. Junior sales

- 2015/16: 60,762
- 2016/17: 52,117