

Press release: UK gifts historic shipwrecks to Canada

Ownership of the two shipwrecks, HMS Erebus and HMS Terror, two of the most archaeologically important shipwrecks in the world, was formally transferred to the Canadian government with the signing of a Deed of Gift at a ceremony today. With this historic transfer, Inuit of Nunavut, who played a key role in their discovery, will also become joint owners of the wrecks and artefacts.

The ceremony at the Canadian Museum of History saw the Canadian Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Catherine McKenna, accept ownership of the wrecks on behalf of Canada from the UK government, represented by the British High Commissioner Susan le Jeune d'Allegeershecque CMG. Mr Torsten Diesel, from the Inuit Heritage Trust spoke of the importance of this transfer to Inuit.

The gifting is an historic milestone in the long-standing cooperation between the UK and Canada on the issue.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We have deep historic links with Canada and this gift is testament to our prospering relationship.

The story behind these vessels is both fascinating and incredibly important to the history of both our nations. The UK joined forces with the Canadian government and Inuit population to search for these ships for 172 years and I'm delighted they will now be protected for future generations.

The two ships, under the command of Rear-Admiral Sir John Franklin, set sail from England in 1845 on an ill-fated voyage through the Canadian Arctic to find the Northwest Passage. During the treacherous journey, the ships became trapped in thick sea ice. The crews abandoned the ships to trek overland to safety, but tragically none survived.

Despite many attempts to locate the wrecks, they proved elusive for over 172 years. In 1997, the UK and Canadian governments signed an agreement giving custody and control of the wrecks and their contents to Canada, while still remaining property of the UK.

Thanks to Inuit knowledge of the area, along with state of the art technology, Erebus was finally located in 2014 and Terror two years later in 2016 in shallow Arctic Waters.

In recognition of this momentous discovery, the British and Canadian governments jointly settled a new agreement. As of 26 April 2018, ownership of the vessels has been formally transferred to the government of Canada, and by extension, the Inuit Heritage Trust.

Artefacts from the wrecks will be available for display at museums in both countries. Currently there are examples on display at the Canadian Museum of History as part of the “Death in the Ice” exhibit.

Canadian Minister of Environment and Climate Change Catherine McKenna said:

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the United Kingdom for this exceptional gift of the wrecks of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror and all yet-to-be discovered artifacts. Moving forward, we will work with the Inuit Heritage Trust to ensure these historic treasures are protected, and that the intriguing and expanding story of the Franklin Expedition continues to be shared with Canada and the world.

Press release: New cost options for rural development better, but should be more widely used by Member States, say EU Auditors

[Download PDF](#)

Pressemitteilung: Neue Kostenoptionen im Bereich Entwicklung des ländlichen Raums sind besser, sollten aber in den Mitgliedstaaten breitere Anwendung finden, so das Fazit der EU-Prüfer

[Download PDF](#)

Press release: Boat patrols target illegal fishing

Environment Agency Fisheries Enforcement Officers in the North East are continuing their crackdown on illegal angling.

This week they carried out boat patrols on the River Tees on the lookout for people fishing illegally. On Wednesday they reported two men for fishing for pike during the coarse fishing close season near Preston Park.

The close season prevents fishing for coarse fish for 3 months to give the fish a chance to breed. It runs from 15 March to 15 June inclusive.

Kevin Summerson, Fisheries Enforcement Technical Specialist with the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

The Environment Agency's role is to protect fish stocks and improve fisheries. This includes rescuing fish in distress, improving habitat and restocking rivers across the region which have been affected by pollution or poor fish passage.

However, the close season means fish are left alone during the spring to allow them the opportunity to breed. During this time our specialist enforcement teams police illegal fishing as they do all year round to ensure compliance with the law.

Licences checked

Enforcement officers have checked around 500 anglers since the beginning of April so far, with most being fully licensed and compliant. Enforcement officers have reported 15 people for offences.

During March the Environment Agency prosecuted nine anglers at courts in the North East for unlicensed fishing and associated offences, resulting in fines and costs totalling almost £2,000. Kevin added:

We take all kinds of illegal fishing very seriously, whether it's those fishing without a licence or licensed anglers using illegal equipment.

It's not fair on other anglers who make sure they fish within the law, and also endangers the future of the sport by damaging the sustainability of fish stocks. It's really important people report information about suspected illegal fishing to us so we can investigate.

The Environment Agency's work is intelligence-led and they work closely with partners to target known hot spots and where illegal fishing is reported. It urges anyone to report illegal fishing by calling 0800 80 70 60.

Coarse fishing is still allowed on most still waters and canals, depending on fishery owner agreement, though a valid fishing licence is still required. You can check which still waters and canals still have a close season in operation by [checking the byelaws which apply in your area online](#)

Anyone who wants to go fishing needs to buy a fishing licence. A full annual licence costs from just £30 (short term and some concessionary licences are also available) and are [available online](#)

Questions & Answers: EU cooperation on vaccine preventable diseases

What are the benefits of vaccination?

Vaccination is one of the greatest successes of public health. Before vaccines existed, many children would die young, or become crippled for life. In Europe, seasonal flu vaccination prevents around 2 million people from getting the flu each year. Worldwide, vaccination prevents 2.7 million people from contracting measles, 2 million from getting neonatal tetanus, and 1 million from getting pertussis (whooping cough) each year. Vaccination has also led to the eradication of smallpox, and the near elimination of polio.

Vaccines are a safe and effective way of protecting children and adults from serious illness and complications from vaccine-preventable diseases. They can prevent a disease from occurring in the first place, saving human suffering, and reducing healthcare costs. Vaccines protect not only you but others around you, provided that 'herd immunity' is reached. In the case of measles, diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis, a 95% coverage rate is required to protect the whole community.

Are vaccines safe?

Yes. Despite the myths that have led to doubts amongst a growing proportion of EU citizens, an extensive body of research has proven the effectiveness and safety of vaccines. Reports of a link between the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccine and autism, for example, were based on a now discredited study. The EU has very strict rules for the market authorisation of vaccines. On average, it takes 12 to 15 years, including extensive clinical studies, to develop a vaccine. Once on the market, the European Medicines Agency continues to supervise a vaccine's safety, to detect, prevent and communicate any adverse effects.

Are vaccine-preventable diseases increasing in the EU?

Several EU and neighbouring countries are in the midst of unprecedented outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases, due to insufficient vaccination coverage. Between 2016 and 2017, cases of measles more than tripled in the EU, bringing the total in 2017 to 14,000 cases. In the past 2 years, over 50 people have died due to measles and 2 from diphtheria. Furthermore, although the EU is currently polio-free, with falling vaccination rates, we run the risk that the virus will reappear on European soil.

Seasonal flu vaccination coverage in older age groups has also decreased in the past few years in the majority of EU countries, and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control estimates that 40,000 people in Europe – many of whom are elderly, die prematurely from complications from seasonal flu every year.

What are the key drivers of falling vaccination coverage?

The first reason is vaccine hesitancy. Misconceptions about vaccination have shifted the public focus away from the benefits of vaccination, towards distrust in science and fear of possible side effects. While routine vaccination has led to a sharp reduction in vaccine-preventable diseases, it has also led to the severity of such diseases frequently being underestimated by citizens and healthcare workers alike.

A second challenge is the variation of vaccination policies and schedules between EU countries, which can be a particular obstacle to people who move between several EU countries during their lives. Variation in when vaccines are administered and the number of doses, for example, can cause confusion, and this can result in children not getting all the vaccines they need. Varying vaccine policies between countries can also lead to the perception that there are differences in opinion on the vaccines themselves.

Other factors that play a role in immunisation gaps include a lack of access to vaccines, vaccine shortages, challenges related to the research and development for new and existing vaccines, including unpredictable demand and insufficient motivation for industry to make the necessary investments in terms of financing and expertise, and constraints linked to public financing.

Why should we step up EU-level cooperation in this area?

Infectious diseases such as measles, diphtheria and influenza are not confined within national borders. One EU country's immunisation weakness puts at risk the health and security of citizens across the EU. Given the cross-border nature of vaccine-preventable communicable diseases, and the common challenges faced by EU countries, there is a clear advantage to strengthening cooperation among all relevant sectors at EU level. Moreover, Member States themselves have requested intensified EU support, and stressed the need for common EU action and a more coordinated approach.

Why have you chosen a Council Recommendation as the instrument?

Given that the organisation of vaccination programmes is a national

competence, the Commission is proposing that Member States agree on a set of joint measures, in the form of a Council Recommendation. The proposal for a Council Recommendation on vaccine preventable diseases, accompanied by a Commission Communication on the policy rationale of acting together in this area, gives Member States flexibility and takes into account their history, practices and particular cultural challenges. It is also the best instrument for achieving the desired results.

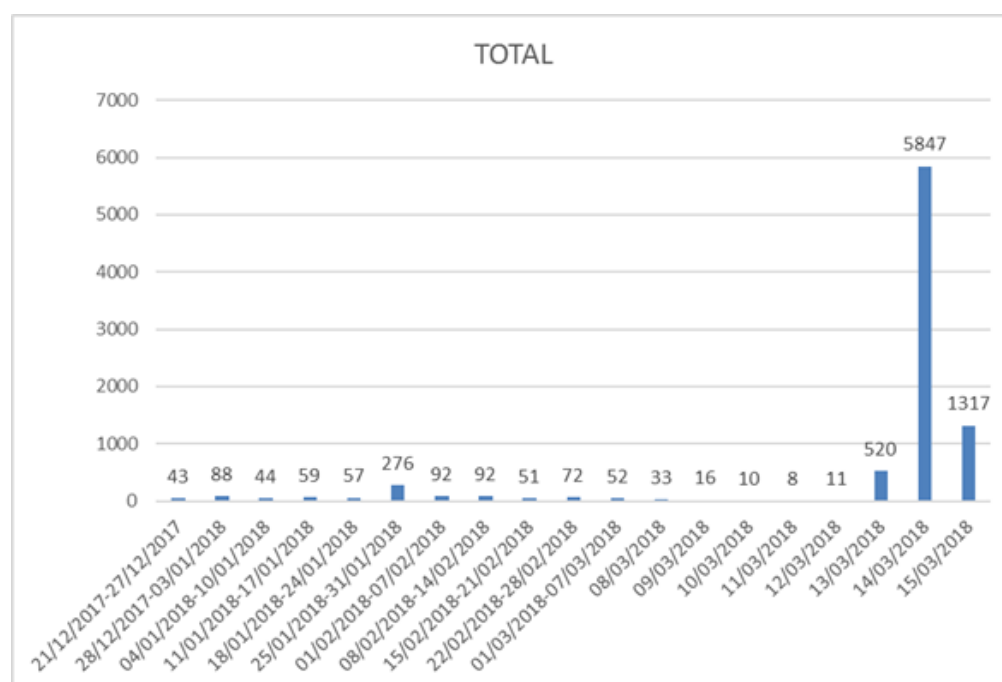
Who was consulted on the proposal and to what effect?

The Commission consulted stakeholders and citizens, and organised a series of targeted face-to-face meetings with professional healthcare organisations, health NGOs, student organisations and the industry. The most support was for:

- EU and national authorities' support for healthcare professionals in advocating for vaccination and tackling hesitancy;
- scientific guidance and information from the EU and its agencies tailored to the specific circumstances of individual EU Member States;
- investment in R&D focusing on vaccine safety and effectiveness, with greater transparency and industry involvement.

The online consultation revealed citizens' lack of trust in the safety and effectiveness of vaccines as well as a lack of trust of public authorities and industry. For instance, 70% of the 8,688 citizens' replies, most of which were from France and submitted to the 12-week consultation within the same 24-hour period, chose 'no opinion' for all questions and submitted anti-vaccination comments. These replies suggest that powerful influencers greatly contribute to the current vaccine hesitancy in the EU that the Commission initiative intends to tackle as a key priority.

Timescale and number of replies to online consultation



What are the next steps?

The Commission's proposal will be discussed by the Council, with the aim of seeing it adopted before the end of 2018, with an immediate entry into force. Following this, every 3 years, the Commission will report on progress made in the implementation of the Recommendation. In addition the Commission will also produce a report on '*The State of Confidence in Vaccines in the EU*', to monitor attitudes towards vaccination, in the context of the [State of Health in the EU](#) process.

For more information

https://ec.europa.eu/health/vaccination/overview_en

<https://ecdc.europa.eu/en/immunisation-and-vaccines>