

Press release: UK's rarest freshwater fish caught on film for the first time

The film was shot on a remote controlled yellow submarine while assessing how much sediment is building up on the bottom of Derwentwater in Cumbria. [Watch it here](#)

Vendace (*coregonus albula*) is the UK's rarest freshwater fish and a relic of the ice age. Its UK habitat is in Derwentwater and like lamprey, Arctic charr, spined loach, allis shad, twaite shad and smelt, it is an international conservation priority.

The Environment Agency carries out regular surveys of water quality around the country and over the past five years has worked with farmers, businesses and water companies to improve and protect over 15,000km of rivers, lakes, coastal waters and bathing waters. England's rivers are the healthiest they've been for 20 years and salmon, sea trout and other wildlife have returned to many rivers for the first time since the industrial revolution.

Andy Gowans, Environment Agency fisheries specialist, said:

It was a unique moment to capture this iconic fish live on film. Seeing the vendace is a good indication of the health of the lake's water. Derwentwater is the only place these fish inhabit in the UK, so maintaining the quality of the water is vital for their survival.

Dr Ian Winfield, from the [Centre for Ecology & Hydrology](#), who leads the survey on Derwentwater and operated the remote-controlled yellow submarine, said:

As the day closed, I decided I would go out to the deepest part of the lake which is about 20 metres and drop the submarine in. I'm able to view the images from the submarine's filming live and was keen to see what fish showed up.

Although, the vendace came and went within in a matter of seconds, I knew it was a vendace. This was an amazing moment for a scientist, I was not expecting to see one, never mind film one. I knew I had captured for the first time on film the elusive vendace species.

The Environment Agency and the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology plan to do further surveying later in the year using more advanced filming technology.

Major Role for RAF at World's Premier Air Combat Exercise

MAJOR ROLE FOR RAF AT WORLD'S PREMIER AIR COMBAT EXERCISE

The world's premier air combat exercise is underway in Nevada, with the Royal Air Force (RAF) playing a major role alongside American and Australian counterparts.

Set at Nellis Air Force Base, Red Flag pits 'Blue' coalition forces against hostile 'Red Force' aggressors, mirroring real-life threats in air-to-air, air-to-ground, space and cyber warfare.

Typhoons, from 6 Squadron, RAF Lossiemouth, are operating in a swing-role capacity, fighting their way into hostile airspace, launching precision strikes on ground targets and fighting their way out again.



The Typhoons have also worked with the US Air Force (USAF) F-35A Lightning II for the first time, and with USAF F-22 Raptors – hugely rewarding exposure to 5th Generation aircraft for RAF crews ahead of the F-35B's introduction into the RAF's combat inventory in 2018.

Air Control Centre are supporting RAF assets at Red Flag, helping control air battles from the ground and conducting their 'taxy to target' capability: taking aircraft taxiing at Nellis and guiding them through to dropping bombs on target.

Voyager, the RAF's 'petrol station in the sky', is taking part for the first time to provide a key air-to-air refuelling capability during the exercise, while a Sentinel and Rivet Joint are gathering intelligence and other mission-critical information.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said: "The RAF is playing a major role alongside our greatest ally in the world's leading aerial combat training exercise.

"Britain's pilots and aircrews will receive unparalleled training and an opportunity to sharpen the combat skills they are demonstrating every day in the fight against Daesh.

"Training alongside our US partners and other nations shows how the UK is stepping up internationally, ensuring maximum interoperability with our allies, and in doing so helping keep Britain safer and more secure."



Group Captain Graham Pemberton, RAF Detachment Commander for the exercise, said: “Red Flag replicates truly challenging, high-end warfare – from realistic aerial combat to emerging cyber and space threats. It’s as close as we can get to the real thing.

“Testing ourselves against highly capable enemy aggressors is hugely beneficial and improves and readies our personnel – from pilots to those in crucial support roles – for real-world operations.

“It’s a privilege for us to work with our US Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force counterparts and to cement our relationships with them at an exercise of this scale.”

Wing Commander Billy Cooper, whose 6 Squadron Typhoons are taking part in Red Flag, said: “We flew eight Typhoons here from RAF Lossiemouth to take part with our US and Australian counterparts.



“One of our UK day jobs is protecting sovereign airspace through Quick Reaction Alert, but in Nevada we’ve been air-to-air fighting and carrying out strike missions.

“Red Flag’s threat replication is truly unique. We can simulate fighting our way into a target area through a high-threat environment, drop precision munitions on specific targets and then fight our way back out again.”

Red Flag’s live element takes place over the US Air Force’s premier military training area in Nevada; over 15,000 square miles of airspace and 2.9 million acres of land – an impossible scale to achieve in Europe.

The exercise runs until early February and marks the start of three months of RAF Typhoon activity in the US, with 6 Squadron participating in Red Flag, 2 Squadron taking over for Exercise Green Flag and 1 Squadron taking part in a tri-lateral exercise with the US and France.

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Photographers: Sgt Neil Bryden and Cpl Graham Taylor

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[RAF Typhoons Monitor Russian Aircraft](#)

Carrier

RAF Typhoons Monitor Russian Aircraft Carrier

Typhoon aircraft from RAF Coningsby have been monitoring the Russian aircraft carrier, Admiral Kuznetsov, as it sails through UK waters on its way home to Russia from the Eastern Mediterranean.

The RAF aircraft have been part of a wider ongoing operation that is being conducted in conjunction with the Royal Navy and our NATO allies to monitor the Russian carrier and its accompanying vessels as it passes through the waters of Western Europe on its way home.



Wing Commander Stu Smiley, Officer Commanding Operations Wing RAF Coningsby said "Whilst the British public are familiar with our role escorting Russian long-range aviation, on this occasion we launched to monitor the Russian warships as they transit near to our sovereign waters".

The air operation was planned and is being controlled by the UK Joint Force Air Component, based at RAF High Wycombe. Air Vice Marshal Steve Shell is commanding the Air Operation and said: "The operation to escort the Russian Task Group is part of our routine activity to insure the integrity of UK airspace and waters; the air elements were smoothly and professionally coordinated by the UK JFAC."

The Kuznetsov was sent to the Eastern Mediterranean to participate in Russian military operations in Syria but suspended flying operations after two aircraft were lost in accidents. The aircraft carrier has now been ordered home following the end of operations against rebels in the Syrian city of Aleppo.

The Russian Carrier has been slowly steaming back to Russia and its passage through the English Channels in International shipping lanes is entirely routine. The Secretary of State for Defence, the Right Honourable Sir Michael Fallon MP, however, said: "We are man-marking these vessels every step of the way around the UK as part of our steadfast commitment to keep Britain safe."



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News story: One Public Estate expands to help councils deliver 44,000 jobs and 25,000 homes

One Public Estate expands to help almost three quarters of councils to deliver 44,000 jobs and 25,000 homes through property.

The Cabinet Office and Local Government Association have today announced that a further 79 councils will join the One Public Estate (OPE) programme, bringing the total number of councils participating in OPE to 255 – almost three quarters of all councils in England.

£3.6 million has been allocated to councils across new and existing partnerships on the programme.

The latest funding round means that by 2019 to 20 the partnerships on OPE expect to:

- create 44,000 jobs
- release land for 25,000 homes
- raise £415 million in capital receipts from land and property sales
- cut running costs by £98 million

The funding will support public sector partnerships to work collaboratively on land and property initiatives, generating new jobs and homes, creating more joined up public services to local communities, and delivering savings for the taxpayer.

OPE remains firmly on track to achieve the ambition of 95% of councils on the programme by 2018, with 72% of councils across England now delivering through OPE.

Ben Gummer, Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, said:

One Public Estate is not just about creating savings and collecting land receipts, it also enables the delivery of houses and jobs.

Through this groundbreaking programme, local councils can transform services, unlock significant local growth and crucial efficiency savings through smarter use of property and land.

Lord Porter, Chairman of the Local Government Association, said:

In the drive to get Britain building again it is encouraging to see that over 70% of Councils have now joined the OPE Programme. These councils will strive to collaborate with government and wider

public sector bodies to deliver much needed Housing and services at a local level.

Background

One Public Estate is a national programme initially launched in 2013. It is jointly delivered by the Government Property Unit within the Cabinet Office and the Local Government Association. It supports joint working across central and local government to use land and property to boost economic growth, unlock regeneration, and create more integrated public services. It encourages public sector partners to share buildings, transform services, reduce running costs, and release surplus and under-used land for development.

Partnerships joining the programme will receive funding and both practical and technical support from our team to help solve issues and deliver ambitious transformational projects.

Launched in 2013, One Public Estate has grown from the original pilot scheme of 12 councils to 264, all delivering ambitious projects to meet local needs.

Following on from the successful pilot stages, it was announced in the Autumn Statement 2015 that One Public Estate would receive £31 million to further expand the programme.

A further application window for councils wishing to join One Public Estate will be open in April 2017. To find out more about the programme, email onepublicestate@cabinetoffice.gov.uk.

“Bovine TB at ten year low, but we must work together to eliminate disease” – Wales’ Chief Veterinary Officer

Speaking at NFU Cymru’s Pembrokeshire Annual General Meeting last night, the Chief Vet highlighted the progress made, with over 95% of Wales’ herds now TB free.

The Chief Vet also pointed to the increase in cattle slaughtered and stressed that although still a cause for concern, it did not reflect a worsening situation as is often reported.

Instead, the rise is due to an increase in the use of the more sensitive

gamma interferon blood test and more severe interpretation of the skin test, both of which are flagging infected cattle in herds with a history of bovine TB at an earlier stage.

This increased sensitivity of testing helps to identify infection sooner and reduces the spread of the disease. The number of cattle slaughtered is expected to fall over time as a result of this approach, and as the number of infected herds continues to reduce.

The Chief Vet also highlighted the Cabinet Secretary's position on controlling the disease in wildlife, saying an "England-style" cull had been ruled out in Wales.

The Randomised Badger Culling Trial in England showed a net reduction of 16% of new incidents of bovine TB over nine years. In Wales, the number of new incidents recorded has reduced by 47% in eight years through application of increased testing frequency, improved biosecurity and other cattle control measures alone. However, it is recognised that in a number of long term TB breakdowns the disease picture points towards a wildlife reservoir of infection.

As a result the Cabinet Secretary has proposed a measured response to controlling the disease in wildlife in Wales. Focussing on these persistent TB breakdowns, where it can be objectively proven badgers are infected, it is proposed the infected groups of badgers are trapped and humanely killed.

The Chief Veterinary Officer reported that work has already started to develop bespoke action plans for each herd, including addressing any wildlife contribution to the problem.

Speaking at the conference, Christianne Glossop said:

"We all recognise bovine TB has a significant financial and social impact on farm businesses and the wider rural economy. While it is encouraging to see the number of new herd incidents falling, even in our highest incidence areas, I recognise this is of little comfort to the farms currently suffering a TB breakdown. This is why we are focusing our efforts on eliminating the disease in affected herds."

"The public consultation on our proposed Refreshed Approach to TB eradication is now closed and we welcome the responses we have received. We are committed to eradicating the disease in Wales, but we cannot do this alone. It's encouraging NFU Cymru has welcomed the plans for a regionalised approach, as this is aimed at protecting the low incidence area while bearing down on the disease elsewhere. This will help us to build on the progress made so far as we progress towards our ambition of a TB free Wales."

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths, is considering all response to the consultation on the Welsh Government's refreshed Bovine TB Eradication Programme. The refreshed programme is expected to be published in the spring.