

Defence ecologists boost rare heathland habitats

Some of the UK's rarest reptiles have been given a safe haven on a military site in the heart of Dorset as part of the MOD's drive to create a sustainable estate where wildlife can flourish.

Volunteers and staff from the West Moors Defence Fuels site teamed up with the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) charity and Dorset County Council to remove self-seeded pine trees from the two-hectare area of wet and dry heathland.

The petroleum storage depot is set within the Holt and West Moors Heaths Site of Special Scientific Interest, where the lack of human disturbance has made the area a haven for some of the UK's rarest reptiles including sand lizards, adders and smooth snakes.

Without proper management, heathland will develop into scrub and woodland, losing the huge diversity of plants, invertebrates, birds and reptiles who call it home.

With the invasive trees now removed, ecologists can better support a wide range of heathland species including heathers, reptiles and invertebrates such as the silver-studded blue butterfly.

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin said:

Defence has a key role to play in the Government's green agenda and are proud to be the custodians of 169 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, covering over 80,000 hectares.

This project is another fantastic example of how wildlife and the environment can thrive under our stewardship.

Ecologists from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), who run the depot, worked with ARC over five weeks to remove the pine trees.

Every effort was made to ensure the project was cost-effective, as well as environmentally friendly. The only cost to the MOD was a chipper to chip and remove the pine trees. The chipping company who chipped and removed the pine trees on site were based in the local area, thus limiting the carbon footprint.

DIO ecologists previously worked with ARC at other MOD sites and as a result of their strong relationship, ARC undertook this project voluntarily.

Lt Gen Richard Nugee said:

The DIO ecologists who volunteered their time and efforts to the West Moors heathland represent the best of defence. Their ability to build relationships with local industry and organisations helped make this project a success.

As we continue to look to enhance bio-diversity across the Defence estate, projects like this will encourage a step-change toward a culture of sustainability.

Based on the value of the contribution, the West Moors project has been nominated for an MOD Sanctuary Award, which has recognised outstanding conservation and sustainability efforts across the MOD estate since 1991.

This year the award categories have been revised to reflect the MOD Sustainability Strategy and to encourage more entries from teams involved in broader aspects of sustainability, such as equipment procurement.

Ensuring the defence estate is sustainable is part of the MOD's strategy to reduce its contributions to carbon and greenhouse gas emissions.

Measures like this will be reflected in the department's ongoing Climate Change and Sustainability Review, led by Lt Gen Richard Nugee.

The review will focus on a range of initiatives from the MOD's NZ50 strategy to setting the right baseline for defence's emissions and carbon footprint, and enhancing its biodiversity, with findings set to be published in December 2020.

[Leader of the House of Commons launches 'Why Parliament Works' podcast](#)

Press release

Leader of the House of Commons Jacob Rees-Mogg has launched a podcast series of interviews with academics and parliamentary insiders.



Leader of the House of Commons, Jacob Rees-Mogg

- Leader of the House of Commons Jacob Rees-Mogg launches podcast series of interviews with academics and parliamentary insiders
- Episodes exploring lawmaking process and how parliament delivers for voters to be released Monday 31st August 2020
- Guests include Professor Vernon Bogdanor, Minister for the Constitution and Devolution Chloe Smith, former Commons clerk Lord Lisvane and Professor Philip Lord Norton of Louth

A new government podcast exploring Parliament's place at the heart of the UK's constitution is being launched today.

Initial episodes of 'Why Parliament Works', hosted by the Leader of the House of Commons, Jacob Rees-Mogg, are being made available across podcasting platforms.

The podcast will help listeners explore Westminster's inner workings from a number of different perspectives, including those of backbencher, peer, officials and ministers.

It comes at the start of an intensive period of delivery for Parliament, which will consider a wide range of government bills throughout the autumn.

Leader of the House of Commons Jacob Rees-Mogg said:

Our parliamentary democracy only works when it delivers for voters, which is why it is so important that this government is getting on with legislating to level up every part of the United Kingdom.

I have been fortunate to be able to spend time exploring the lawmaking process with some of the UK's leading academics and parliamentary insiders, who have helped shine light on some of the less-appreciated aspects of the UK Parliament's work. I hope all

those who are fascinated by parliament will find their insights as interesting as I did.

The podcast's first four episodes are being released together, with further episodes featuring First Parliamentary Counsel Elizabeth Gardiner QC, former Commons Clerk Robert Rogers, Lord Lisvane and others to follow this autumn.

The first four episodes feature the Leader of the House in conversation with the following interviewees:

- Professor Vernon Bogdanor, Research Professor at King's College London's Centre for British Politics and Government
- Natascha Engel, former MP and Deputy Speaker
- Professor Philip Lord Norton of Louth, Professor of Government and Director of the Centre for Legislative Studies at the University of Hull
- [Chloe Smith MP](#), Minister for the Constitution and Devolution

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[Transport Secretary announces plans to make pavements accessible for all](#)

- new plans set out to boost safety and make journeys more accessible for disabled people and parents
- review found third of people with visual impairments and almost half of wheelchair users were not as willing to go out because of antisocial pavement parking
- consultation will set out proposals to make transport more accessible and help more people to choose active travel as part of UK's green recovery from COVID-19

Pavements could be made safer for people with disabilities, and families, under new proposals to ban antisocial parking unveiled by the government today (31 August 2020).

Parking on pavements disproportionately affects people with visual or mobility impairments, those assisted by guide dogs, and wheelchair and mobility scooter users. More than 95% of wheelchair users and people with visual impairments say they had problems with vehicles parked on pavements.

Three options are proposed in the [consultation launched today](#) – improving the traffic regulation order process to make it easier for councils to prohibit pavement parking in their areas, giving councils powers to fine drivers who park on paths, and a London-style nationwide ban on pavement parking.

However, there is still a major role for cars and other private vehicles, so any future plans will need to take this into consideration.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Parking on pavements means wheelchair users, visually impaired people and parents with pushchairs can be forced into the road, which is not only dangerous but discourages people from making journeys.

A key part of our green, post-COVID recovery will be encouraging more people to choose active travel, such as walking, so it is vital that we make the nation's pavements accessible for everyone.

Pavement parking presents a clear safety risk when parked cars occupy the pavement and force vulnerable pedestrians to move into the road.

Disabled people say pavement parking is a significant barrier to carrying out daily journeys. Recent research from the charity Guide Dogs shows that 32% of people with vision impairments and 48% of wheelchair users were less willing to go out on their own because of pavement parking, decreasing independence and contributing towards isolation.

As many streets were built decades and centuries before the high levels of vehicles currently on roads, any measures will need to ensure the free flow of traffic and access for the emergency services.

The consultation is the government's latest step to deliver on commitments to make transport equally accessible for all users by 2030, as set out in the [Inclusive Transport Strategy](#).

Stephen Edwards, Director of Policy and Communications at Living Streets, said:

We're regularly contacted by disabled and older people who feel trapped in their homes because there is not enough room on the pavement for wheelchairs or mobility scooters.

This has impacted more people during the pandemic with blocked pavements affecting everyone's ability to physically distance.

Blanche Shackleton, Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Campaigns at Guide Dogs, said:

For many people with sight loss, cars and vans parked on the pavement make our streets stressful and dangerous to navigate. At any time, you might be forced out into the road with traffic that you cannot see.

When every journey is an ordeal, simply going out independently can become daunting.

Justine Roberts, Founder and CEO of Mumsnet, said:

Lots of us have occasionally parked a couple of wheels up on the pavement to leave space on the road without really thinking about how it might inconvenience people.

It's a topic that comes up regularly on Mumsnet, where wheelchair users and people with buggies share stories about being forced into the road or having to double back long distances.

The consultation comes as Transport Secretary Grant Shapps steps up efforts to encourage active travel – such as walking – as part of a green, post-COVID-19 recovery, and level up road quality across the country.

The government announced £2 billion in May to get more people walking and cycling, and £2.5 billion in the Budget towards repairing potholes as part of the biggest nationwide programme ever announced.

On top of this, the government is also investing more than £27 billion to improve roads across the country and boost connectivity between our towns and cities.

It is currently an offence to cause an unnecessary obstruction on the highway, which is enforceable by the police.

[War on plastic waste stepped up with extension of plastic bag charge](#)

The Government has today stepped up its fight against single-use plastics by confirming that the plastic carrier bag charge will be extended to all retailers from April 2021.

Since the charge was first introduced in 2015, the Government has successfully prevented billions of plastic bags being sold and ending up in the ocean and environment.

The latest statistics show the current levy, which stands at 5p and applies to any retailer employing 250 or more people, has led to a [95 per cent cut in plastic bag sales in major supermarkets since 2015](#).

[Today's announcement](#), which marks the latest move to clamp down on plastic

pollution, will drive this success even further and take us closer to our ambition to eliminate avoidable plastic waste through our 25 Year Environment Plan and build back greener after coronavirus.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

We have all seen the devastating impact plastic bags have on the oceans and on precious marine wildlife, which is why we are taking bold and ambitious action to tackle this issue head on.

The UK is already a world-leader in this global effort, and our carrier bag charge has been hugely successful in taking billions of harmful plastic bags out of circulation. But we want to go further by extending this to all retailers so we can continue to cut unnecessary waste and build back greener.

I hope our pioneering track record on single-use plastics will inspire many more countries to follow suit, so we can take on plastic waste together and implement lasting change.

As a result of the carrier bag charge, the average person in England now buys just four bags a year from the main supermarkets, compared with 140 in 2014. By extending the charge to all retailers, ministers want to see bag usage cut significantly in small shops as well, with customers incentivised to use long-life bags made from more sustainable and environmentally-friendly materials.

Dr Laura Foster, Head of Clean Seas at the Marine Conservation Society said:

It's encouraging to see the government take further steps in reducing our reliance on single-use plastic bags. Since the introduction of the 5p carrier bag charge we've seen a more than 60% drop in the number of plastic bags on the UK's beaches.

It's so important we reduce our reliance on single use items and we move to a culture of reuse. This increased charge, and extending to all retailers, will help remind people of everyday, simple changes they can make to help the marine environment.

In a [public consultation last year](#), the government proposed to double the charge and extend it to all retailers, with the vast majority of respondents welcoming the move – which Defra has now committed to implementing from April 2021, in a [formal response published today](#).

Other key government actions on plastics include a [world-leading ban on microbeads](#), consulting on introducing a [deposit return scheme to drive up the recycling of single-use drinks containers](#), and a [ban on the supply of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds](#) which will come into force in October.

The government will also introduce a [new world-leading tax on plastic packaging](#) which does not meet a minimum threshold of at least 30% recycled content from April 2022, subject to consultation, to encourage greater use of recycled plastic to tackle the problem of plastic waste and protect the environment.

Crackdown on private car parking firms will eliminate unfair fines

- Communities Secretary launches crack down on rogue private parking firms
- New Appeals Charter will eliminate fines for motorists who make genuine errors or have mitigating circumstances
- Implementing a tiered system to differentiate between major and minor offences
- Increasing maximum fines for serious offences

Unfair private parking tickets will be eliminated through the introduction of new rules for private car parks, the Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP has announced today (31 August 2020).

The government has put forward proposals designed to crack down on rogue car parking firms that will form part of a new Parking Code of Practice and Framework.

The proposals include, a maximum cap for parking fines, a 10-minute grace period before a late fine can be issued and a requirement for parking firms to clearly display pricing and terms and conditions.

The new measures will be a major boost to millions of motorists in England, Scotland and Wales and will help to draw people back to their local high streets by eliminating the fear of being penalised with an unfair parking ticket.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

These new measures are a victory for the millions of motorists across the country. They will put a stop once and for all to rogue parking firms using aggressive tactics and handing out unfair parking tickets with no right to appeal, while also boosting our high streets by making it easier for people to park near their local shops without being unfairly fined

Our proposals will restore common sense to the way parking fines are issued, while cracking down on the worst offenders who put other people in danger and hinder our emergency services from

carrying out their duties.

Fresh measures proposed in the new Code and Framework include the creation of a mandatory single Appeals Service and Appeals Charter for motorists to turn to if they are unfairly fined. Under options set out in the Appeals Charter, motorists could be able to appeal their fine and see it reduced to a maximum of £20, or cancelled entirely if:

- they have a mitigating reason for overstaying their parking ticket such as their vehicle breaking down
- they have made a genuine innocent error, like keying in a digit in their number plate incorrectly
- they have a valid ticket, permit or Blue Badge but failed to display it correctly

The consultations also propose:

- A new, tiered approach to parking fines with a cap for less serious offences between £40 and £80 depending on the parking charge system chosen (but both lower than the current £100 cap), and a new, increased fine of up to £120 for drivers who wrongly park in disabled bays or ambulance bays
- A compulsory 10-minute grace periods before firms can issue a late fine
- A compulsory 5-minute cooling-off period in which a motorist can consider the terms and conditions and change their mind about parking
- A crackdown on parking firms using aggressive or pseudo-legal language to intimidate motorists into paying fines
- A requirement for parking firms to clearly display pricing and terms and conditions of parking, contact details and how to appeal a charge

High Streets Minister Simon Clarke MP said:

We want to get people back onto the high street to shop local and support small businesses, and these proposals mean motorists will be able to do so without having to worry about being landed with an unjust ticket and no way to appeal.

These measures will drive up standards in the parking industry by clamping down on rogue operators and offering a safety net so that responsible motorists who make an innocent mistake are not penalised unfairly for doing so.

Unlike existing voluntary codes set by industry, the new Code and Enforcement Framework will be mandatory and provide a single set of rules to follow. Rogue firms which break the Code could be barred from requesting Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) data, making them unable to pursue motorists for their charges through the post.

Steve Gooding, Director of the RAC Foundation said:

The publication of the government's consultation document alongside the BSI's draft code of practice is a major milestone in bringing the provisions of Sir Greg Knight's Parking Act to life.

It is clearly important that we get the code of practice, and the framework within which it will sit, right, so I would encourage everyone with an interest to respond with their views.

Scott Steedman, Director of Standards at BSI said:

In our role as the National Standards Body, BSI brought together industry experts and consumer groups to reach consensus on a new standard to support better parking practice in the operation and management of parking facilities on private land.

This new standard, called PAS 232 Privately managed parking – Operation and management, is available for public comment until 12 October 2020. Once all the comments have been reviewed by the steering group, we plan to publish the standard at the earliest opportunity.

Sir Greg Knight, Member of Parliament for East Yorkshire who piloted the Parking (Code of Practice) Bill through Parliament and onto the Statute Book said:

I am delighted that a new statutory Code of Practice on parking now moves a step closer to being introduced. This whole process is intended to stop unfair and dodgy practices arising. The new Code of Practice, when implemented, will, I believe, make the process of parking fairer and more transparent for all concerned.

The Parking (Code of Practice) Act became law in March 2019 and builds on action the government has already taken to tackle rogue private parking firms, including banning wheel clamping and towing and stopping over-zealous parking enforcement by councils.

The consultation for the new [Parking Code of Practice](#) will be published on the BSI website and will run until 12 October.

The consultation for the new [Parking Enforcement Framework](#) will be published on GOV.UK and will also run until 12 October.

The Parking (Code of Practice) Bill was a Private Members Bill introduced by Sir Greg Knight MP, supported by the government and received Royal Assent in March 2019. It covers England, Wales, and Scotland – creating consistency for motorists everywhere in Britain.

Currently there are 2 parking trade associations, the British Parking Association and the International Parking Community. Each has a Code of Practice that their members are required to abide by, but there is no single set of rules, so motorists are vulnerable to bad private parking practices such as deliberately poor signage and unfair parking fines.

The government is proposing that the New Appeals Charter will reduce parking charges to between £0 and £20 for the issues below:

- Significant Evidence of mitigation or genuine, legitimate reason – fine cancelled
- Non-evidenced mitigation – if accepted, fine reduced to between £0 and £20 dependent upon the circumstances
- Evidenced vehicle breakdown – fine cancelled for motorist and recovery vehicle
- Failure to display permit/Blue Badge/pay and display ticket (copy then supplied) – fine reduced to between £0 and £20.
- Keying error at pay and display machine – Minor (one letter wrong, removed or swapped or numbers and letters in the wrong order but still recognisable) – fine cancelled
- Keying error at pay and display machine – Major (motorist enters their partner's registration, multiple keying errors or only partial number plate entered) – fine reduced to between £0 and £20

The government is also proposing a new tiered system for parking fines. There are 2 options for this, with 3 or 2 tiers proposed. The 3-tier system could operate as follows:

- Upper Level Breach up to a cap of £120 (discounted to £70 when paid within 14 days) for the most serious breaches which put motorists or others in danger or relate to anti-social behaviour with a direct impact on the vulnerable or business revenue, including:
 - Parking in an accessible bay (Blue Badge bay)
 - Parking where parking not permitted such as in an ambulance bay or outside fire escape.
 - Obstructive or dangerous parking to the detriment of others
 - Parking in service/loading areas and/or yellow box, hatched areas
- Middle Level Breach up to a cap of £100 (discounted to £60 when paid within 14 days) for breaches which, while not as serious as the upper level, still impact upon businesses, landowners, the environment and genuine customers or car park users:
 - Parking in a reserved bay (parent and toddler)
 - Parking on pavement where parking is not permitted
 - Parked in Staff Parking Only area
 - Overstay of maximum free period or paid-for tariff.
 - Vehicle exceeds maximum weight and/or height and/or length permitted in the area
 - Parking across multiple bays

- Lower Level Breach up to a cap of £80 (discounted to £50 when paid within 14 days) for poor parking or issues which cause inconvenience to other car park users:
 - Parking in bays for other classes of vehicles such as motorcycles or scooters, bicycles or taxis.
 - Use of an expired permit
 - Re-parking / returning within period prohibited
 - Parking where parking not permitted such as grass verges or landscaped areas
 - Parking with engine running where prohibited
 - Permit displayed not valid for area occupied

Alternatively, it could result in a 2-tier system that would mirror that found in local authority parking regulation. This local authority system operates as follows outside of London:

- Upper level breach between £60 – 70 (discounted to £30 – 35), including:
 - Parked in a suspended bay/space or part of bay/space
 - Parked in a residents' or shared use parking place without clearly displaying either a
 - permit or voucher or pay and display ticket issued for that place
 - Parked in a restricted area in a car park
 - Parked in a designated disabled person's parking place without clearly displaying a
 - valid disabled person's badge
- Lower level breach between £40 – 50 (discounted to £20 – 25)
 - All other contraventions would fall into this penalty charge level.

For London, penalty charges are set by the London local authorities acting jointly and by Transport for London, with the approval of the Mayor (and provided that the Secretary of State does not object.) There are 2 tiers as set out below with a higher penalty charge level and different contraventions that fall into each level. Again, lower-tier councils can choose a slightly lower charge, as long as they apply it consistently:

- Upper level breach between £110 – 130 (discounted to £55 – 65)
- Lower level breach between £60 – 80 (discounted to £30 – 40)