

Press release: Fishing licence money funds Severn Rivers Trust 'tool bank'

The Environment Agency, through its Fisheries Improvement Fund, has provided a wide selection of tools to help fishing clubs improve river habitats and access to fishing.

A wide range of hand tools including saws, hammers and spades make up a 'tool bank' which will be managed by the Severn Rivers Trust. Local angling clubs and volunteers can borrow the tools for small habitat projects. A number of habitat days will also run to show clubs techniques for creating natural habitat features to benefit fish.

Ieuan Davies, from the Severn Rivers Trust said:

We're delighted to receive these tools, and we'll be opening up a loan based system to allow angling interests in the River Severn catchment to borrow and use them for their projects.

We hope having access to these tools will allow a diverse set of improvement works to be carried out, and we will be happy to back up this resource with advice from our in house experts, as well as links to volunteer helpers where needed. We look forward to engaging with locals, volunteers and anglers on a wide range of fisheries improvement projects.

Fisheries experts from the Environment Agency and the Severn Rivers Trust work in partnership to give angling clubs and volunteers advice on how to improve habitats, but often small improvements that can really make a difference don't go ahead because people don't have access to tools and materials.

Ed Noyes, Fisheries Technical Officer from the Environment Agency said:

We're pleased to be able to use Angling Improvement Fund money, which comes directly from fishing licence sales, in this way.

Access to the tool bank will help fishing clubs and volunteers carry out low cost, small improvements which across the whole Severn catchment will really enhance the environment for many species of fish.

The tools can be hired by contacting the Severn Rivers Trust.

For more information on tools or training days please contact the Severn Rivers Trust on 01886 888394 or admin@severnriverstrust.com

News story: Vacancy – Security Sector Programme Officer (Ramallah based)

The British Consulate General in Jerusalem is seeking an individual for the position of Security Sector Programme Officer (Ramallah based), Grade – B3 (L). We encourage all eligible candidates to apply for the role. Please feel free to distribute the advertisement widely to any suitable candidates.

For both Internal and External candidates : Please click [here](#) to learn more about the vacancy and how to apply.

The closing date for all applications is 9 February 2018.

Press release: Trustees removed and disqualified after failing to account for half of charitable expenditure or perform checks on overseas agents

The Charity Commission has removed two trustees and disqualified an individual from trusteeship as part of its investigation into the charity Peacetrail. The charity's objects were to advance the Islamic faith and relieve poverty by supporting women and children who face financial hardship in the UK and abroad.

An inquiry report published today details a series of failings including a failure to account for at least £92,110 – nearly 50% of the charity's total expenditure.

The Commission opened the investigation on 31 March 2016 and found self-authorised salary payments to the charity's CEO, unmanaged conflicts of interest and a lack of due diligence or monitoring of those the charity worked with. The Commission's findings are set out in this report.

The inquiry concluded that the trustees had failed to exercise control over the charity's finances or oversee the CEO; and the Commission made orders

under section 79(4) of the act to remove two individuals as trustees of the charity. These individuals are now disqualified from acting as trustee of any other charity unless they obtain a waiver from the Commission or the courts.

The inquiry was also concerned by the conduct of the charity's CEO and their role in the charity. Therefore the Commission used its powers under section 181A of the act to disqualify the CEO from being a charity trustee or holding a senior management position within a charity for 4 years and 6 months. The disqualification came into effect on 18 January 2018.

The charity, which was a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, has been dissolved in accordance with the Charitable Incorporated Organisations (Insolvency and Dissolutions) Regulations 2012 and ceased to exist when it was removed from the Register of Charities on 31 October 2017.

Michelle Russell, Director of Investigations, Monitoring and Enforcement at the Charity Commission says:

The public rightly expects those entrusted with charitable funds to steward and safeguard them appropriately. That sadly did not happen in this case. The trustees of Peacetrail clearly failed to discharge their legal duties which is why we exercised our powers to remove them.

Charity trustees have an important legal duty to ensure that their charity's funds are spent on the charity's objects. This includes keeping clear accounting records that can evidence exactly where charity money has gone. Transparent reporting in this way is vital for maintaining public trust and confidence in charities.

The Commission's full report of its inquiry is available on [GOV.UK](#).

Ends.

1. The trustees were removed pursuant to section 79(4) of the Charities Act 2011, which also has the effect of disqualifying them from being charity trustees or acting as trustees for a charity under section 178 of the act.
 2. The new discretionary disqualification power in section 181A of the Charities Act 2011 brought in by the Charities Act 2016 allows the regulator to disqualify a person it considers unfit from being a trustee, for a maximum period of 15 years.
 3. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see the [about us](#) page on GOV.UK.
 4. Search for charities on our [check charity tool](#).
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Press release: Superfast broadband now available to more than 19 out of 20 UK homes and businesses

The Government has delivered on its manifesto commitment to extend superfast broadband to 95% of the UK by the end of 2017, DCMS Secretary of State Matt Hancock announced today.

Figures published by www.thinkbroadband.com have confirmed that more than 19 out of 20 UK homes and businesses now have the opportunity to upgrade their internet connections to superfast speeds of 24 Mbps or faster – more than double what Ofcom advise is required by a typical family home.

The £1.7 billion Government rollout of superfast broadband to areas deemed “not commercially viable” by industry has so far reached more than 4.5 million UK premises that would otherwise have been left in the connectivity slow lane, the majority of which are in rural areas. In addition to the huge benefits to our day-to-day lives that superfast speeds offer, this closing of the “digital divide” has also delivered a significant boost to local economies – creating around 50,000 new local jobs and generating an additional £8.9 billion in turnover in the areas covered by the Government rollout between 2013 and 2016.

DCMS Secretary of State, Matt Hancock said:

Over the last 5 years, the Government’s rollout of superfast broadband has made superfast speeds a reality for more than 4.5 million homes and businesses who would otherwise have missed out. We’ve delivered on our commitment to reach 95% of homes and businesses in the UK, but there’s still more to do in our work building a Britain that’s fit for the future. We’re reaching thousands more premises every single week, and the next commitment is to making affordable, reliable, high speed broadband a legal right to everyone by 2020.

December was a particularly busy month for Openreach who, as the Government’s major partner on this massive infrastructure project, have been working hard throughout the winter months to ensure the rollout remained on track. In total, around 800,000 homes and businesses were reached last year through the UK Government BDUK programme alongside commercial delivery, with Openreach delivering the major proportion of this achievement; and as a result of this deployment, the 95% target was achieved in December 2017.

Clive Selley, CEO, Openreach, said:

This is without doubt an extraordinary achievement and I’d like to

thank the thousands of Openreach engineers and the many more of our people supporting them, who have worked so tirelessly to make this happen.

We have come a long way in a short space of time, with one of the fastest broadband deployments in the world. This is an important milestone – but we're not stopping here. We're determined to get Britain – the whole of Britain – hooked up to decent broadband speeds. The Government's Universal Service Obligation will make high speed broadband a legal right and we'll be working with industry, Government and Ofcom to deliver this. In the meantime, we'll be continuing to expand our network to address the remaining not-spots through a combination of our own commercial programmes and our partnerships with local authorities and communities.

A clause in the Government's contracts requires suppliers to recycle funding when people take up superfast connections installed as part of the programme. Over 2.25 million homes and businesses have taken up superfast broadband in areas covered by BDUK projects. To date, BT has set aside £477 million to extend coverage over the full lifetime of the contracts – up from £292 million in December 2016 – in nations and regions around the UK.

Combined with project efficiencies of at least £210 million resulting from the successful management and delivery of the programme, there will be up to £687 million available for local authorities to re-invest and take superfast speeds to those homes and businesses not already covered by existing plans.

Together with other planned delivery, this will help take superfast coverage to the majority of the remaining premises over the next few years. In addition to this, the Universal Service Obligation the Government is bringing in will give everyone the legal right to high speed broadband (10Mbps or faster) by 2020, meaning that no-one is left behind, and that all UK homes and businesses have the connectivity they need in the digital age.

Notes to Editors

1. The latest broadband coverage figures are at the [ThinkBroadband website](#)

[Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on Kabul attack](#)

I am shocked and appalled by yesterday's horrific attack in Kabul and condemn it in the strongest possible terms. The use of an ambulance as a weapon to target civilians is despicable.

Once again, so many innocent Afghan lives lost and so many people's lives affected. My heartfelt condolences go out to the victims and their families. I commend the brave Afghan men and women in the emergency services for their response to this brutal act.

The UK stands resolutely with Afghanistan against terrorism and calls for those responsible to be brought to justice. We remain firmly committed to supporting Afghan efforts to bring peace to Afghanistan. Yesterday's attack makes it all the more crucial that all parties intensify efforts to pursue dialogue. Regional and international partners must be united in support of this goal. The Afghan people deserve peace.