

Press release: Professor Nick Hardwick responds to concerns about Worboys' case

I believe public bodies should be open to scrutiny and accountable for their decisions.

So, I would welcome a decision by the Lord Chancellor to judicially review the Parole Board in the Worboys case and we will not stand in the way of such a review taking place. I hope such a review will provide assurance that the Parole Board itself has acted in accordance with the law and the evidence.

Public concern about the Worboys case is completely understandable and it is right that the anguish of his victims should be heard.

The Parole Board considers nearly 25,000 cases a year. Almost every one of those cases involves horrible offences with victims' lives changed forever. There will be victims of offences that did not go to trial or result in a conviction and there will be others indirectly but painfully affected such as family members, witnesses and those who have to deal with the crime. The ripples from serious offences spread very wide.

That is the reality of the Parole Board's work.

For prisoners like Worboys, once they have served the 'tariff' or the punishment part of their sentence set by a judge, they will be referred to the Parole Board by the Secretary of State and the Board must then determine if they are safe to release. The test that Parole Board's 250 members must apply in deciding whether to release a prisoner is that 'it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public that they should be detained'; in other words, the burden is on the prisoner to demonstrate they are safe to release, not the panel to demonstrate they are too dangerous to do so.

The law governing the Parole Board's decisions is quite clear. We have to make decisions about future risk. We cannot re-assess the prisoner's guilt or innocence or whether the original sentence was appropriate even if we would like to do so. The decision about future risk will be informed both by evidence of how the prisoner has changed and the robustness of plans to manage him or her in the community.

I do not make decisions on individual cases, but I have observed many hearing and am struck by the careful and sensitive way panels make their decisions. Do they always get it right? No. Less than one per cent of those we release commits a serious further offence and each is a terrible incident. But I would not be honest if I pretended risk could be eliminated completely. Parole Board members need to be confident a prisoner will not reoffend – but they cannot be certain. If certainty is required that needs to be reflected in the length of the original sentence.

The Parole Board Rules prohibit the Parole Board from disclosing details of individual cases. I do not think this is right. Justice needs to be seen to be done. If the parole system is closed and secretive we cannot complain if people do not understand it.

I welcome the government's review of this area and hope it will be radical.

I don't say this will be easy. Some victims tell us they want to put the offence behind them and fear that opening the system up would put them through the media mill again and expose them to prurient public interest.. So, while looking at all the options we should proceed carefully and make sure we do not do more harm than good.

Although we are prohibited from revealing details of the Worboys case I will say something about the processes followed.

First, I share the concerns that victims say they were not kept informed or consulted about licence conditions.

The law says victims do not have a say in whether a prisoner is released on parole or not – that happens at the original trial when the tariff is set – but they should have an opportunity to ensure the panel understands the impact the offence had on them and have a say in the licence conditions that apply after release. They can make a written statement, attend the start of a hearing to read their statement in person or say nothing at all.

Other than receiving and carefully considering their statements, the Parole Board has no role in contacting or liaising with victims. That is undertaken by the Victim Contact Service, part of the National Probation Service, on behalf of the Secretary of State. The Parole Board sought and received assurance on a number of occasions that victims who wanted to make a victim statement had the opportunity to do so and were informed about the outcome of the hearing.

There are very serious allegations that some victims who should have been kept informed were not and victims and the public deserve to know exactly what happened. There should be an independent investigation by someone outside the Parole Board and Ministry of Justice into this specific issue and I call on the Secretary of State to initiate this.

As for Worboys' hearing itself, it was a three-member panel chaired by one of our most experienced women members. One of the other members was a parole board psychologist. The panel considered a dossier of 363 pages and heard evidence from four other psychologists, and prison and probations staff responsible for Worboys. The Secretary of State was represented at our request. Worboys himself was questioned in detail. The panel considered a written statement from one victim.

It is particularly concerning that other victims now state they did not have an opportunity to give their views. I know that some victims are frightened. The licence conditions are very detailed but can be varied. The probation service must now ensure that even at this stage victims have an opportunity

to have any concerns about licence conditions considered and should apply to the Parole Board for licence variations where this is appropriate.

Finally, let me say this. The Parole Board is in effect a court. We should be open to legal challenge but I hope when people think about it, they will agree it is right we resist political interference in our decisions. Like any court, the Parole Board members must make independent decisions in accordance with the law and on the basis of evidence. It would be a bad day for us all if people's rightful abhorrence of Worboys' crimes or even justified concern about a Parole Board decision allowed these basic principles of justice to be overturned.

News story: Scottish Secretary meets engineers and apprentices as UK Government launches campaign to inspire the next generation

Scottish Secretary David Mundell visited a major engineering company to support a pioneering UK Government campaign to transform the way young people see engineering and boost numbers entering the profession.

Mr Mundell toured Mitsubishi Electric's Livingston facility and met engineers and apprentices as the Year of Engineering was launched to highlight the scale of opportunity that careers in the industry hold for young people in the UK.

2018 is officially the Year of Engineering and will see a national drive in all corners of the country to inspire the young people who will shape our future.

Engineering is one of the most productive sectors in the UK, but a shortfall of 20,000 engineering graduates every year is damaging growth. There is also widespread misunderstanding of engineering among young people and their parents and a lack of diversity in the sector – the workforce is 91% male and 94% white.

The new campaign is aimed at filling those gaps and changing misconceptions, and will see government and around 1,000 partners deliver a million inspiring experiences of engineering for young people, parents and teachers.

Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

It was great to be at Mitsubishi Electric to promote the UK

Government's Year of Engineering campaign and see engineers and apprentices in action. Scotland has a world class engineering sector which makes a major contribution to the UK's economy. But there is a shortage of young people entering the profession in the UK and a lack of diversity. Our campaign will help address these challenges by increasing the understanding and awareness of this exciting career among young people and deliver a new generation of talented engineers.

Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling said:

Engineers – whether they are working on cutting-edge technology in aerospace, energy or artificial intelligence – are vital to the lifeblood of our economy.

We want to show young people and their parents the immense creativity, opportunity and value of the profession. By bringing them face to face with engineering role models and achievements we can send a clear message that engineering careers are a chance for all young people, regardless of gender, ethnicity or social background, to shape the future of this country and have a real impact on the lives of those around them.

Skills Minister, Anne Milton said:

I want to see everyone whatever their background, wherever they live to have a chance to get a rewarding career or job in engineering whether they come via a technical or academic route.

The Year of Engineering gives us a great opportunity to work together with business to inspire a new generation of world class engineers. We want to build the science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills that we need for a growing economy, as highlighted in the Government's Industrial Strategy.

Yoshihiro Sumida, company president of Mitsubishi Electric Air Conditioning Systems Europe (M-ACE) said:

Our Corporate Mission is to continually improve our technologies and services by applying creativity to all aspects of our business. Advanced Engineering is obviously a key to this as well as to the growth of our business here in Scotland. In this context we operate a well-established engineering apprenticeship programme in our factory, with the valued support of West Lothian College. I welcome the UK emphasis on improving engineering skills and we as a company will keep making contributions to this end.

All this week, engineers, businesses, schools and universities will be marking the launch of the campaign by celebrating the positive impact of engineering.

[Press release: A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon nominated for top environmental award](#)

The £1.5bn project is one of five finalists in the BBC Countryfile Magazines Awards 2018 in the Conservation Success of the Year category. The project will see 21 miles of A14 in Cambridgeshire upgraded to three lanes in each direction (four between Bar Hill and Girton) and is aiming to leave a positive footprint on the local environment when it is complete by the end of 2020.

Members of the public are able to vote for the project via the BBC Countryfile Magazine Awards website from Friday 19 January in a poll that stays open until Monday 5 March.

One of the ecologists at work releasing some of the water voles into their new habitat in August 2017

Carol Hardingham, environmental lead for the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon project for Highways England, says:

I am delighted that the environmental mitigation on the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon upgrade has been selected as one of the five finalists for the [BBC Countryfile Magazines Awards 2018](#) in the Conservation Success of the Year category.

Protecting the environment now and in the future is one of the golden threads that runs through all aspects of the scheme, from design to construction, project management to efficiency and delivering value for taxpayers' money.

Our work sets the standard high in terms of reducing the overall impact of a road scheme on the local environment during construction and after the scheme completion.

We began thinking about the environment at a very early stage in the A14 project, and we will continue our work well after the construction of the road has been completed.

We are proud to be able to achieve this at the same time as

building a road that will make it faster and safer for people to travel through South Cambridgeshire, leave a positive legacy for local communities and businesses and support the country's economy.

The nomination was put forward by readers after an article about the industry-leading A14 environmental mitigation project was featured in BBC Wildlife Magazine's January 2018 issue. A panel of five expert judges including nature journalists and authors selected the project among a long list of projects put forward for each category.

BBC Wildlife Magazine editor and awards judge Sheena Harvey says:

It's a project that should lead the way in how to mitigate that damage done by infrastructure works – this is an example that needs to be out there for people to follow.

Since the A14 upgrade scheme was given the go ahead in May 2016, the A14 ecology team has been busy planning and creating new habitats and protecting wildlife during construction, as well as surveying the construction site for protected flora, gathering rare wildflower seeds and specimens to replant after the end of construction, and planning the tree replanting scheme once construction has been completed.

When the project is complete, 271 hectares of new, connected habitat for wildlife (equivalent to 269 rugby pitches) will have been created, and twice as many trees as were felled before the start of the scheme will have been replanted.

To find out more about the BBC Countryfile Magazine awards, the A14 project's nomination and to vote, [visit the Countryfile website](#). The winners will be announced in mid-March.

Work on building the £1.5bn upgrade to the A14 between Cambridge and Huntingdon started in November 2016. The project includes widening a total of seven miles of the A14 in each direction (across two sections), a major new bypass south of Huntingdon, widening a three-mile section of the A1 and demolition of a viaduct at Huntingdon, which will support improvements in the town.

For the latest information about the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme, visit the scheme page, <http://www.highways.gov.uk/A14C2H> follow @A14C2H on Twitter and like our [Facebook page](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Gedling MP looks at Nottingham's flood defences](#)

Gedling Member of Parliament Vernon Coaker has visited the Holme Sluices at Colwick, Nottinghamshire to find out more about the Trent flood defences and the work of the Environment Agency.

The MP met with EA officials, led by Louise Cresswell, Area Director for the East Midlands, to see how the sluices work in protecting properties from flooding and how they maintain levels in the River Trent during times of low flow.

He also discussed the general work of the EA including the ambitious plan to improve fish passage for all species in the lower River Trent.

The EA are seeking support for the Trent Gateway Project which aims to open up 8 barriers on the river which presently block fish migration.

At present, the EA has funded the design of a possible fish pass at Colwick sluices and are working in conjunction with Nottingham City Council on a proposed Heritage Lottery Fund bid to build a visitor hub at Colwick Country Park.

Louise Cresswell, Area Director, East Midlands, said:

The visit of one of our local MPs was a great opportunity to talk about how the EA works to improve the environment for everybody.

We took time to show how the sluices work and to explain the flood defences for the area generally which protect a huge number of people and properties, including many in his own constituency.

The Trent Gateway Project is an ambitious plan to improve fish passage on the River Trent. Our aspiration is to open up all of those 8 weirs for passes which will increase the fish populations both coarse and salmon.

Vernon Coaker, Member of Parliament for Gedling, said:

It was a fascinating visit and gave me a better understanding of the River Trent and how it works.

The Environment Agency are doing some great work and it is important that we continue to work together for the good of the local area.

I feel very passionately about protecting our local environment and I was pleased to hear all about the Trent Gateway Project which is an ambitious project but one that will benefit everybody by helping to improve the environment.

[News story: MHRA update to pharmaceutical companies on exit preparations](#)

Update on negotiations

The European Council formally agreed on 15 December that sufficient progress has been made to move on to the second stage of the negotiations, and adopted [guidelines](#) for that second phase.

This followed the publication of a [Joint Report on progress during the first phase](#) by the Government and the European Commission on 8 December.

These are important steps forward for both sides and demonstrate the shared interest in managing our exit smoothly, and in moving on with our negotiations.

In the context of ensuring continuity in the availability of goods placed on the market under Union law before withdrawal, the Joint Report makes clear that “goods placed on the market under Union law before the withdrawal date may freely circulate on the markets of the UK and the Union with no need for product modifications or re-labelling; be put into service where provided in Union law, and that the goods concerned should be subject to continued oversight.”

The guidelines set out the need for the EU and the UK to complete work on all withdrawal issues and to start drafting the Withdrawal Agreement. The UK looks forward to continuing these discussions.

The EU guidelines also acknowledge the proposal put forward by the UK for a time-limited implementation period, based on the existing structure of EU rules and regulations. The aim is for access to one another’s markets to

continue on current terms throughout this period, and for it to be based on the existing structure of EU rules and regulations.

Both parties have recognised the importance of such a period in the interests of providing certainty and continuity to businesses and individuals, and the EU is expected to adopt additional negotiating directives on transitional arrangements in January 2018. The UK expects to be able to rapidly agree the detail with the EU in 2018.

Finally, the guidelines reconfirm the EU's desire to establish a close future partnership with the UK. As the UK enters the second phase of negotiations, its position on medicines regulation remains clear. The UK is fully committed to continuing the close working relationship with its European partners, in the interests of public health and safety. Its aim is to ensure that patients in the UK and across the EU continue to be able to access the best and most innovative medicines and be assured that their safety is protected through the strongest regulatory framework and sharing of data.

Preparing for all outcomes

MHRA is aware that companies who market pharmaceuticals in the EU and UK will need to plan and make decisions in advance of the UK's departure from the EU in March 2019.

As noted above, the UK's intention remains to secure an implementation period based on the existing structure of EU rules and regulations as quickly as possible, and to agree a deep and special future partnership.

We will continue to advise businesses on the basis of the UK position and will continue to work with the European Medicines Agency in planning for the UK's withdrawal from the EU and future relationship.

Current regulatory relationship between UK and European network

It is also important to note that the UK's current regulatory relationship with the European network remains unchanged. The UK has underlined to Member States and to the EMA on several occasions that at present:

- the UK continues to be a full member of the EU: we will fulfil our responsibilities, and, in turn expect to be treated as such.
- the UK continues to bid for EMA work and expects its bids to be respected and considered on merit. There are simple, pragmatic solutions to manage the possibility of various outcomes in March 2019: we are, for example, putting forward UK bids in conjunction with other Member States, in the centralised procedure, to ensure business continuity where procedures are likely to run beyond this date.
- MHRA have committed to complete all assessments under evaluation at the time that the UK departs from the EU and will make assessment reports

available to the network.

- the UK continues to carry out its Official Control Authority Batch Release (OCABR) responsibilities as part of the Official Medicines Control Laboratory (OMCL) network for human biologicals.
- the UK will continue to put candidates forward for leadership roles where appropriate and expects the committees with responsibility for electing chairs to do so on merit.

UK regulatory requirements after March 2019 in the event of no ongoing relationship with EMA networks

Companies have been asking for detail about UK legislative requirements in different scenarios. We have been working closely with industry associations and other stakeholders and further details on all these issues and more – both our Day One and longer-term proposals – will be published when appropriate.

As stated above, the UK intends to agree a time-limited implementation period with the EU, and both parties have recognised its importance. Should however there be no implementation period, MHRA's approach would be in line with the following principles:

- the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill will convert the existing EU legislative framework into UK law at the moment of exit, so there would be no sudden changes to the UK regulatory framework.
- we would be pragmatic in establishing UK regulatory requirements. We would give adequate notice and ensure that companies had sufficient time to implement any changed requirements.
- where possible, we would be making use of the information we already have to complete administrative tasks for continuity of work and licences.
- we would ensure the minimum disruption and burden on companies as the UK exits the EU, while building on the existing relationship between MHRA and firms.

We will continue to engage with business, patient groups and other stakeholders to help plan ahead with certainty, and will look to publish more technical detail if appropriate.