

Press release: Government report highlights English cathedrals' community spirit

A new report commending England's 42 Anglican cathedrals for their continued importance as places of worship, their wider community work and their commitment to promoting local economic growth has been published today (29 December 2017) by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The report, "[Cathedrals and their communities](#)", is the culmination of a year long tour which saw the Minister for Faith, Lord Bourne visit all of England's 42 Anglican cathedrals to better understand their continued importance both to local communities and wider society.

The report highlights cathedrals as diverse churches that are not only important sacred centres of worship but also places of valued social support and community and interfaith engagement. This includes:

- the interfaith projects delivered by Chelmsford and Norwich Cathedrals which build on the shared interests of different faith communities
- the unifying response of Manchester and Southwark Cathedrals in the wake of the terrorist attacks in both cities
- Carlisle, Durham and Hereford Cathedrals' support for Syrian refugees, including providing vital English language lessons
- the extensive work undertaken by many cathedrals across the country together with local authorities to help rough sleepers
- cathedrals, such as Blackburn and Bradford, driving regeneration in town and city centres through collaborating with local authorities, developers and the local community
- the continuing efforts of cathedrals including Chester, Chichester, Lichfield and Liverpool to attract visitors through well-thought out themed events such as arts festivals and Christmas markets
- the dedication of cathedral staff across the country in preserving the architectural splendour and heritage of their buildings

Minister for Faith Lord Bourne said:

There is no better time to remind ourselves of the strong role cathedrals play in our national life than at Christmas, as worshippers gather in naves across the country to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

This year-long tour has given me a real understanding of how the innovation and vibrancy displayed by cathedral staff and their congregations is ensuring that these important churches continue to play a crucial role at the heart of local communities now and for centuries to come.

The report highlights a number of great examples cathedral staff working hard at preserving our local cultural heritage, engaging with a diverse range of communities while continuing their spiritual duties. I look forward to hearing about further successes in the future.

The Very Reverend Adrian Dorber, Chairman of the Association of English Cathedrals, said:

Lord Bourne's report is a really helpful endorsement of all that our English cathedrals are trying to be and do. We want to continue as places of welcome and be able to offer spiritual hospitality and friendship to all. We're grateful to the Government for taking the time and trouble to conduct such a thorough programme of visits and investigation and for finding out what we do and what our ambitions for the future are. I hope the report will be widely read.

Our cathedrals and churches are crucial to the present and future of local communities and the government is committed to helping them open up further to community, cultural and heritage use, to safeguard their position at the beating heart of our towns and cities.

The government set up the First World War Centenary Cathedral Repairs Fund 2016 to 2018 to provide cathedrals across England with funds for essential repairs, from heating systems to stained glass windows.

The [English Churches and Cathedrals Sustainability Review](#), set up in 2016 in collaboration with the Church of England, will consider how best to ensure that England's 16,000 cathedrals and churches remain at the centre of civic life while also ensuring that these unique and historical buildings are sustainably maintained and funded.

There were 9.4 million visitors to cathedrals in 2015; a further 1 million people visited Westminster Abbey. 75% of the UK's churches and cathedrals are listed. Two thirds of church buildings and 75% of grade I listed churches are in rural areas where only 20% of the population lives.

See where Lord Bourne has visited using #CathedralTour. A list of cathedrals in the order the Minister visited them is as follows:

2016

- Bradford – 27 October
- Ely – 4 November
- Southwark – 8 November
- Portsmouth, Chichester – 25 November
- Leicester – 8 December
- St Albans – 16 December
- Chelmsford – 20 December
- Salisbury and Winchester – 23 December

2017

- Peterborough – 20 January
- Carlisle, Newcastle and Durham – 16 to 17 March
- Gloucester and Hereford– 31 March
- Guildford – 10 April
- Manchester – 29 May
- Norwich and Bury St Edmunds – 29 June
- Lincoln, Southwell and Derby – 7 July
- Lichfield, Coventry and Birmingham – 13 July
- St Paul's – 20 July
- Worcester and Oxford – 21 July
- Liverpool, Chester and Blackburn – 27 to 28 July
- Bristol, Wells, Exeter and Truro – 8 September
- Ripon, York, Wakefield and Sheffield – 14 to 15 September
- Rochester and Canterbury – 22 September

News story: New appointments to the Veterinary Products Committee (VPC)

Enrique Vega, Mark White, Ye-Mei Ruby Chang, Andrea Tarr, Helen Ballantyne and Rachel Bennett have been appointed members of the VPC. Professor Malcolm Bennett has been appointed as Chair.

Their appointments, by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Michael Gove, will commence in January 2018.

The new members will receive £148 per meeting with an additional £76 for preparation. The Chair will receive £185 per meeting with an additional £94 for preparation.

- Enrique Vega is a veterinary surgeon with experience of public health and food safety
- Mark White is a pig consultant
- Yu-Mei Ruby Chang is a chartered statistician
- Andrea Tarr is a pharmacist
- Helen Ballantyne is a dual qualified registered nurse in veterinary and human health
- Rachel Bennett is a qualified veterinary surgeon with experience of clinical pharmacology
- Professor Malcolm Bennett is a veterinary surgeon and has served on the VPC since January 2012

Their appointments adhere to the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies. All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process.

In accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for appointees' political activity (if any declared) to be made public: none of these seven members have declared any political activity during the past five years.

The VPC advises the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) on behalf of the Secretary of State. The VMD is an executive agency of Defra and is responsible for ensuring the safe and effective use of veterinary medicinal products to protect public health, animal health, and the environment.

Press release: Sajid Javid acts to help businesses affected by unfair 'staircase tax'

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has today (29 December 2017) published [draft legislation](#) to reverse the impact of a 'staircase tax' which has unfairly affected up to a thousand businesses.

A recent Supreme Court judgment saw hundreds of businesses that operate in adjoining units or rooms, but are accessed from a common corridor or staircase, receiving separate rate bills for each unit.

The ruling also resulted in some businesses facing higher rate bills, with some paying more due to the loss of small business rate relief.

The action Sajid Javid is taking today will mean these firms can choose to have their rates recalculated under the old single bill system and any savings due will be backdated.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The 'staircase tax' is an unfair rates hike for businesses. For years these businesses in adjoining units or rooms received one rates bill, but this ruling meant they now faced multiple bills for operating in an office linked by a communal lift or stairs.

I am ending this by giving those businesses affected the option of getting their rates bills recalculated and any savings due backdated.

The publication of draft legislation follows a decision in the Supreme Court (Woolway v Mazars) which brought about a change the practice of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) in assessing rateable values for businesses.

Following this ruling, businesses who occupied more than one property in a shared building received a separate rates bill for each unit. This was widely known as the 'staircase tax' and meant businesses in adjoining units who had previously received one rates bill, were now being subject to several bills. Some businesses were paying more overall due to the loss of small business rate relief – a discount applied to the bills of certain businesses with a lower rateable value.

This ruling overturned an established and widely understood practice where businesses occupying two adjoining floors or two rooms separated by a wall only received a single bill.

Subject to Parliamentary approval of the Bill, those businesses who have been directly impacted by the Supreme Court judgement can ask the VOA to recalculate valuations based on previous practice. It can then have its bill recalculated if it chooses, and backdated. This includes those firms who lost small business rate relief.

The department will now consult with stakeholders and experts, with a view to introducing the Bill shortly. See the [consultation document](#).

Press release: UK aid helps clear lethal landmines in war-torn countries following generosity of British public

Mines Advisory Group (MAG) deminers at work in Angola. Picture: MAG

In response to the unprecedented generosity of the UK public in supporting the most successful Christmas landmine-clearing appeal ever, International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt has today (29 December) announced that Britain will extend its demining work to save lives in emergencies in Angola, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

Through the support announced today, the UK will work in Angola to eradicate the scourge of landmines, through both UK aid programmes and the UK Government matching pound for pound public donations to the [Mines Advisory Group's \(MAG\)](#) appeal. Angola was where Princess Diana once walked through a landmine littered field to raise awareness of the devastating impact they have on innocent lives.

At an event this year with HRH Prince Harry, DFID made a £100 million commitment to demining to make 15 million square metres of land safe again and Ms Mordaunt is today announcing the war ravaged countries that will benefit from this support. As part of the UK's ongoing commitment, 15,000

community visits will also educate people about the risks of landmines – a paramount and essential lifeline to safeguard entire communities from being maimed or killed.

The MAG's 'Walk Without Fear' appeal on Radio 4 was the station's most successful ever radio appeal. Money donated by the generous UK public to the demining cause has been matched by the UK government, doubling the total amount raised to allow even more lives to be saved.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

Landmines have left a shameful legacy of suffering across the world, and the British public can be proud of their contribution to eradicating this hidden, indiscriminate killer.

These barbaric weapons of war kill innocent people years after a conflict has ended, and have left so many devastated families mourning the loss of loved ones. The thousands that do survive have been left maimed and seriously disabled forever, unable to work, unable to feed their families and suffering from a lifetime of debilitating pain.

Twenty years after Princess Diana's call for action resonated in every corner of the world, Britain is at the forefront in saving thousands of lives and ensuring that future generations will now have the chance to live without fear of being killed by a weapon from the past.

MAG's appeal raised a total of over £200,000, which will be doubled by UK aid to over £400,000. This will clear 120,000m² of land from landmines, allowing people to live without fear in their own communities.

Notes to Editors

- The money raised by MAG in its appeal, and the public donations matched by the UK Government are in addition to the £100 million commitment over three years made by DFID in April 2017. This £100m commitment comprises:
 - £12.6 million in the current financial year as an extension to the pre-existing contract of the Global Mine Action Programme, which is delivered by the Halo Trust, MAG and Norwegian People's Aid in Burma, Cambodia, South Sudan, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Laos, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.
 - £20 million for Afghanistan in financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20.
 - £15.4 million for the Middle East including Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen in financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20.
 - The remainder will be for demining programmes in financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20 in Angola, South Sudan, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.
- This year alone Global Mine Action Programme has ensured that more than

140,000,000 square meters of land have been released. Mine risk education programmes have reached more than 426,000 people this year, including near 360,000 women and children.

- DFID will be continuing its programming in Asia and Africa including Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Zimbabwe, Somalia and South Sudan.
- In January 2018, DFID will invite organisations to bid for work in Angola, South Sudan, Lebanon, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.
- In Afghanistan the UK has supported demining activities, through the HALO Trust in Herat (Western Afghanistan), Baghlan, Balkh and Samangan (Northern Afghanistan) since 2008, through two five year phases with a total of £20.5 million. This support to the HALO Trust in Afghanistan will end in March 2018. Through UK aid:
 - 193,650 families have benefited from cleared lands in Herat, Baghlan, Balkh and Samangan
 - 2,900 hectares have been unblocked for development purposes (agriculture, grazing, residential and road access)◻
 - 96% of households surveyed reported increased income as a result of mine clearance
 - 43 communities have been cleared of all known mine/UXO hazards
 - 380 direct and 660 indirect jobs have created in all target provinces
 - Over 39,147,860 square metres of accessible minefields have been cleared in target provinces
 - Over 45,609,000 square metres of remaining area of battlefield with unexploded ordnance and ammunition are cleared in target provinces.

ENDS

Press release: Further 9 terror-related offences added to Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme

Changes to the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme mean that people found guilty of crimes such as tipping off terrorists about an investigation, or flouting terror prevention court orders, could see their sentences increased if victims or the public think the punishment is too light.

The plans announced today (29 December 2017) follow an extension in July which added 19 terror offences to the scheme, with Ministers acting to ensure sentences reflect the devastating impact terrorism has on victims and communities.

Justice Minister Dominic Raab said:

We keep counter-terrorism powers under constant review. These changes will strengthen our ability to punish and deter those who tip off individuals involved in terrorism, and reinforce the conditions imposed by the authorities on individuals subject to monitoring, supervision or control.

The scheme gives anyone the power to ask the Attorney General to review a sentence, who can then decide to refer a case to the Court of Appeal for reconsideration.

In 2016, a record 141 criminals had their sentences increased, helping victims and their families get justice. This is a small proportion of the 80,000 Crown Court cases heard each year, where in the clear majority the judiciary get it right, but the ULS scheme is there to allow adjustment of those sentences where an increase is warranted.

The new crimes announced today include instances where a person learns of terrorist activity through their trade, profession or employment, and fails to report this information to the police. For example, an accountant discovering a client may be funding terror. They also include offences related to breaching orders imposed to protect the public from terrorism, for instance someone suspected of involvement in terrorist activity overseas, who returns to the UK, in breach of travel restrictions.

The decision to add 9 further terror offences builds on a manifesto pledge to widen the scheme. Next month will see the first case referred to the Court of Appeal by the Attorney General, made possible through the expansion in July.

Attorney General Jeremy Wright QC said:

The Unduly Lenient Sentencing Scheme added over 400 years of imprisonment to criminal sentences last year.

While in the vast majority of cases sentencing judges get it right, the ULS scheme gives anyone the ability to challenge sentences within the scheme they think are too low and I'm pleased that more offences will now be included.

Notes to editors

- The ULS allows the Attorney General (AG) to review sentences given by the Crown Court in England and Wales.
- The AG has 28 days to consider the sentence and make a decision whether to refer. If the AG decides to refer the case to the Court of Appeal to review the sentence, the court can decide whether the sentence should stay the same, or if it is unreasonably low, can increase it.
- In July, 19 terror offences were added to scheme, including encouraging

terrorism and sharing terrorist propaganda.

- The scheme will now be extended to a further nine terror related offences. The new crimes involve failing to disclose information about offences relating to terrorist property, breaching terrorism-related orders, and offences to dangerous articles and making threats. In total, 27 people have been convicted for all of these offences since 2010.
- The changes will come into force on 29 January 2018.

Table of new offences in scope

Offence	Description	Max penalty (yrs)
Terrorism Act 2000 s19	Failure to disclose information on 'terrorist property'- knowledge of which gained through their trade, profession or employment	5
Terrorism Act 2000 s21A	Failure to disclose information on 'terrorist property'- knowledge of which gained through work in the 'regulated sector' (e.g. financial business)	5
Terrorism Act 2000 s21D	Tipping off a terrorist from information obtained in the regulated sector	2
Terrorism Act 2000 s39	Tipping off any person of a terrorist investigation	5
Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 s54	Failure to comply with notification	5
Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011 s23	Failure to comply with a Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measure (TPIM)	5
Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 s10	Contravening a Temporary Exclusion Order (TEO) or not complying with restriction after return to the UK	5
Aviation Security Act 1982 s4	Offences related certain dangerous articles	7
Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 s114	Hoaxes involving noxious substances	7