

[Press release: Minister discusses barriers to voter registration for people with disabilities in Brighton](#)

Minister for the Constitution, Chris Skidmore today (Monday, 7 August) visited [Brighton Housing Trust](#), [Blind Veterans UK](#) and [Brighton & Hove Speakout](#) to hear firsthand about the experiences members have faced when voting or registering to vote.

The Minister heard from all 3 charities about how they raised awareness of participation in the democratic process for the General Election 2017 and what support they provided to residents and clients.

Brighton Housing Trust advises on issues around housing, homelessness, substance misuse and mental health. It is a people-led organisation.

Blind Veterans UK provide support to veterans who are adjusting to sight loss and the charity has been offering physical and emotional support to vision-impaired veterans since 1915.

Brighton and Hove Speakout supports people with learning disabilities to have more control over their lives by giving individual support as well as raising awareness in services and communities and campaigning for changes in services and policies.

Chris Skidmore, Minister for the Constitution said:

“Brighton Housing Trust, Blind Veterans UK and Brighton and Hove Speakout are all fantastic organisations that ensure people experiencing homelessness, or those with disabilities feel confident, empowered and remain an active part of their society.

“A big part of this is being able to register to vote and remain a part of our democracy. Today’s visits have helped me understand how we can support vulnerable people to ensure that ours is a democracy that everyone can participate in.

“Nearly three million applications to register to vote were received online between 18 April and 22 May but there are still under-represented groups we can improve the processes for. Regardless of who you are, or how you vote, every voice matters and we encourage you to register to vote.”

Andy Winter, CEO of Brighton Housing Trust said:

“Homeless people, especially those who are street homeless, can be multiply excluded. To know that their right to vote is being considered at the highest level in government is a great encouragement.

“Voting changes things, not always in a way politicians want, but it is at

the heart of our democracy. Chris Skidmore showed a deep understanding and awareness of many of the issues we deal with on a daily basis. He was keen to learn how voter registration and voting itself can be maximised amongst people who are often invisible and ignored.”

Lesley Garven, Centre Manager at Blind Veterans UK said:

“Whether it’s at one of our centres or in the community, Blind Veterans UK provides vision-impaired veterans with the equipment, skills and support they need to enjoy a full life beyond sight loss.

“Still being able to exercise their democratic rights is a vital part of this, and our veterans and staff enjoyed taking part in the discussion on accessible voting with the Minister for the Constitution, Chris Skidmore.”

Sarah Pickard, Director of Brighton and Hove Speakout said:

“As a learning disabled people’s organisation we know that learning disabled people want to have their say and have their voices heard. We firmly believe that given the right support, access to information and opportunity to build confidence and make their contributions, learning disabled people can participate in all aspects of participative democracy.”

The Minister is visiting Brighton as part of his Every Voice Matters Tour. The tour has taken him to every part of the country to understand how to tackle barriers to voter registration.

Press release: Fines issued after waste illegally used for flood defence

A waste company, 1 of its directors and a tenant farmer involved in the illegal deposit of waste on protected land in an Essex village have been ordered to pay a total of £19,430.

Chelmsford Magistrates’ Court heard that 3,920 tonnes of inert waste was deposited on land at Little Hayes Farm, Stow Maries, breaching a waste exemption. The work was also carried out without a flood defence consent or permission from Natural England. The area is within an environmentally sensitive area which benefits from protection as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a Special Protection Area, a Special Area of Conservation and RAMSAR site.

Chelmsford Magistrates’ Court heard that the site did not comply with the U1 exemption which only allows 1,000 tonnes of soil and stones to be used for construction purposes. Almost 4 times this amount was deposited onto the land between 15 April and 8 May 2015, before the activity was stopped by Natural

England and the Environment Agency.

On Thursday 3 August, 2017 Simon Hollington pleaded guilty to knowingly causing the illegal deposit. T J Cottis Transport Limited and Jedd Cottis (a director of the company) both pleaded guilty to depositing the waste without an environmental permit and failing to comply with duty of care requirements.

Mrs Miriam Tordoff, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told the court the waste was deposited there in an attempt to strengthen the existing flood defence at this location. The material used was construction and demolition waste from development sites and T J Cottis Transport Ltd.'s own permitted waste treatment facility. The waste consisted of mainly soil and stones but also included concrete, brick, plastic, glass, wood and plasterboard. It was not suitable for the construction of flood defences.

Mr Hollington employed T J Cottis to deliver waste to land at Little Hayes Farm, Stow Maries. The company paid Mr Hollington £4,800 to deposit the waste. The company accepted that they saved £24,000 in landfill charges by depositing the waste on Mr Hollington's land.

Mrs Tordoff explained that following the Environment Agency's request to remove the waste Mr Hollington had now applied for an environmental permit to do this. The waste is expected to be removed later this year.

After the hearing Environment Agency enforcement team leader Lesley Robertson said:

This case highlights to landowners that risk taking is not acceptable, whether it is a risk that concerns human health or the environment. Owning a piece of land means accepting a responsibility to the surrounding area and all that resides there, be it business, homes or wildlife.

If you want to operate under a waste exemption you must register that exemption with the Environment Agency. Each registration lasts 3 years and will then expire unless you re-register. Each exemption has specific limits and conditions you need to operate within. If you don't, you will not be exempt from needing a permit and may face enforcement action.

Registering an exemption does not remove the need to apply for other permits or permissions. For example, you may need planning permission for your waste operation. You can find out more on the GOV.UK website at environmental permits.

This prosecution follows extensive work with Natural England.

News story: Current global shortage of hepatitis B vaccine

Public Health England, working with NHS England, the Department of Health and the manufacturers, have put in place a series of measures so that the NHS and other providers can use the available vaccine for those at highest immediate risk. Measures are expected to continue until the beginning of 2018 and will be kept under review.

The risk of catching hepatitis B infection in the UK is very low.

In the UK, vaccination is usually offered to individuals who are at specific risk of being exposed to blood from an infected person. This includes babies born to mothers who are infected with hepatitis B, the sexual partners of infected individuals and a range of other groups such as men who have sex with men, healthcare workers, and people who inject drugs. Vaccination is also recommended for people who will be undertaking certain activities overseas.

A course of hepatitis B vaccine usually involves 3 doses of vaccine, completed over a few months. While supplies are limited, vaccine will be prioritised for those at highest immediate risk based on their doctor's assessment. For other people, a doctor may advise that hepatitis B vaccine can be deferred until later.

Hepatitis B virus is found in the blood and bodily fluids, such as semen and vaginal fluids, of an infected person. It cannot be spread by kissing, holding hands, hugging, coughing, sneezing, or sharing crockery and utensils.

Individuals can reduce their risk of contracting hepatitis B by taking care to:

- avoid having unprotected sex
- not inject drugs, or by not sharing needles when injecting
- avoid having tattoos, piercing or acupuncture when overseas
- avoid accessing medical or dental care in high prevalence countries

Vaccination will still be available, as now, for those who have already been exposed to hepatitis B. Such people should seek urgent medical attention as the infection can still be prevented if treated promptly after the incident.

The recently announced addition of hepatitis B protection to the routine childhood immunisation programme at 2, 3 and 4 months will go ahead. The combined vaccine, which protects against hepatitis B and 5 other diseases, is not affected by this shortage.

Long term hepatitis B infection can be symptomless and people who think they may have acquired the infection in the past should seek a test from their healthcare professional.

Further information on hepatitis B is available at www.nhs.uk/conditions/Hepatitis-B/Pages/Introduction.

Further information on how to reduce your risk of catching hepatitis B is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/hepatitis-b-vaccine-recommendations-during-supply-constraints.

Further advice to travellers is available at travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/50/hepatitis-b.

[News story: Armed Forces celebrate Raksha Bandhan with the Hindu Community](#)

In the run up to today's festival, the Armed Forces Hindu Network organised Raksha Bandhan celebrations across the country, including at the Ministry of Defence in London, marking the strong bonds of protection between the community and the Armed Forces. The network has also hosted in recent weeks a Raksha Bandhan tour across a number of temples in Newcastle, Swindon, Liverpool, and London.

Raksha Bandhan, colloquially known as Rakhi, is an age-old Hindu festival that celebrates brotherhood and love. For the Hindus serving in the Armed Forces, the festival holds special significance as it symbolises the duty of the Armed Forces in protecting their society.

At an event at MOD Main Building in London recently, serving personnel from the Armed Forces and MOD civil servants had a Rakhi (a knot of protection) tied to their wrist. Defence Minister Earl Howe participated in the event and later gave a speech to everyone gathered at the event.

Highlighting the ties and values shared between the Hindu community and the Armed Forces, Defence Minister Earl Howe said:

As we exchange our multi-coloured bands, it's a unique opportunity to remind ourselves of the multifaceted ties that bind our great Hindu community and our Armed Forces together.

To defend ourselves we must unite: speaking up for those beliefs of tolerance, fairness and dignity, that make us who we are.

Embracing the importance of diverse communities, the Minister also added:

Knowing what our diverse communities bring, only makes us ambitious for more. Indeed, this Government is committed to recruiting 10 per cent of personnel from minority communities, by 2020.

Members of community forums, including the Hindu Council UK and the Hindu Forum of Britain, came together to celebrate the occasion, along with the Chief of Defence People, Lieutenant General Richard Nugee, and the Director of Submarine Capability, Rear Admiral Tim Hodgson.

Hindus have time and again contributed to the defence of the UK. During the First World War, 1,750,000 Hindus deployed overseas. In the second World War, over 1.25 million Hindus played a pivotal role in the allied victory.

Last week the Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon and senior Defence leaders paid their respects to those who fell during the First World War, at the commemorations of the centenary of the Battle of Passchendaele.

A ceremony was held at the Menin Gate in Ypres which bears the names of hundreds of Indian troops whose graves are unknown. Located nearby to Menin Gate is The Indian Forces Memorial which is dedicated to the 130,000 troops of the Indian Forces who served in Flanders.

[Press release: Independent review of S4C launched](#)

The UK Government has today announced that Euryn Ogwen Williams will lead an independent review of the Welsh broadcaster S4C.

The review will look at key parts of the organisation including S4C's remit, governance, accountability and its partnership with the BBC and current funding methods.

UK Government in Wales Minister Guto Bebb made the announcement during a visit to the National Eisteddfod on Anglesey where it was also confirmed that BBC will provide a one off payment of support of £350,000 in 2017/18 to provide further stability during the review period.

Euryn Ogwen Williams said:

It's a great honour to be asked to lead the review of S4C at a critical time for the organisation as it meets the challenges of the rapidly changing media landscape. The next decade will be even more challenging as S4C, like all public service broadcasters, nurtures the relationship with its audiences in the digital world.

It must also play a vital role in the development of the Welsh language at a critical time in its history.

Culture Secretary Karen Bradley said:

Euryn has great experience in Welsh broadcasting and was the first Director of programmes when S4C was set up in 1982. His excellent understanding of Welsh broadcasting and the Welsh language, culture and society will only benefit the progress of this important review.

UK Government in Wales Minister Guto Bebb said:

S4C and the wealth of content it produces makes an important contribution to cultural and economic life in Wales, to the prosperity of the Welsh language and to the strength of our creative sector.

The UK Government has repeatedly emphasised its commitment to a strong and independent Welsh language TV service. We are delighted that Mr Williams has agreed to lead this important, independent review. He is tasked with the job of assessing S4C's remit, the way in which it is funded and its governance with a view to ensuring that the broadcaster can continue to invest in high-quality programming and meet the needs of Welsh speaking audiences long into the future.

Huw Jones, Chair of S4C Authority said:

We welcome the Government's announcement regarding the review of S4C, and that Euryn Ogwen Williams, an experienced broadcaster and perceptive analyst of the future of the media, has been appointed to lead the review.

The review will be a key opportunity to note the importance the S4C service's unique contribution to the culture and economy of Wales and the United Kingdom, and to the future of the Welsh language.

Recommendations from the review will be presented to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) later this year.

The Government announced in March that it will provide an additional £350,000 of capital funding to S4C for 2017/18 to help it upgrade technical and IT equipment. The Secretary of State decided that this level of funding should continue for the second half of the year.

Notes to editors:

1. Euryrn Ogwen Williams was the First Director of Programmes when S4C was set up in 1982 and then became the deputy CEO in 1988 until 1991. He has over 50 years of broadcasting experience in Wales, as well as a deep knowledge of the Welsh language, Welsh culture and society.
2. The terms of reference of the review are available here [ADD LINK TO GOV.UK]