

Marine Management Organisation launches consultation on four of England's Marine Protected Areas

The next phase in the Government's ambitious plans for a 'Blue Belt' of marine protected areas around the UK's seas has begun with the Marine Management Organisation's (MMO) formal consultation to protect four of England's 40 offshore Marine Protected Areas.

Now that the UK has left the EU, the UK Government has powers to implement evidenced based marine management that will help ensure our seas are managed sustainably, protecting both the long-term future of the fishing industry and our precious wildlife and habitats.

Marine Protected Areas are designated areas of the ocean which include habitats and species essential for healthy, functioning marine eco-systems. The purpose of a Marine Protected Area is to protect and enhance rare, threatened and important habitats and species from damage caused by activities that take place within it.

The MMO is consulting on byelaws being proposed under new powers introduced under the Fisheries Act, the UK's first major domestic fisheries legislation in nearly 40 years. These byelaws aim to prohibit fishing activities in Marine Protected Areas where there is evidence that they harm wildlife or damage habitats. The proposed byelaws seek to prohibit the use of bottom towed fishing gear in all four sites and additional restrictions for static gears over sensitive features in two of the sites.

The consultation runs from 1 February 2021 to 28 March 2021 and follows a call for evidence, which closed in December 2020, where the MMO sought additional evidence and views on the draft assessments and management options for the four offshore Marine Protected Areas.

These first four Marine Protected Areas were chosen as a priority to help protect their vibrant and productive undersea environments, and include the Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation, which has the largest shallow sandbank in British waters and supports commercial fish species such as cod and plaice, as well as sand eels that provide an important food source for kittiwakes, puffins and porpoises.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

Now that we have left the Common Fisheries Policy, we are able to deliver on our commitment to achieve a healthy, thriving and sustainable marine environment.

The UK has already established an impressive 'Blue Belt' covering 38% of our waters and our Fisheries Act has provided us with additional powers to go further to protect our seas around England.

This proposal to introduce byelaws to safeguard four of our precious offshore Marine Protected Areas shows how we are putting these powers into action.

Action is already being taken to tackle unsustainable activities within England's seas, with management measures introduced in many inshore sites through byelaws introduced by both MMO and the Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities.

Tom McCormack, Chief Executive Officer of MMO, said:

This consultation is a big step forward in agreeing measures that will help protect and revive important marine habitats, vital to the unique and vibrant marine life that live within them.

We are ambitious for England's seas and want to hear as many views as possible in order to create benefits for people and the economy, while protecting our precious marine environment for future generations.

The MMO is seeking views on proposed byelaws for the following four offshore Marine Protected Areas:

- Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation (East of England)
- Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge Special Area of Conservation (The Wash approaches, off the Lincolnshire and North Norfolk coasts)
- South Dorset Marine Conservation Zone (South West – Dorset)
- The Canyons Marine Conservation Zone (South West – Offshore)

The MMO will announce its plan for engagement on the management of non-licensable activities, including anchoring for recreational vessels, for the Studland Bay Marine Conservation Zone on the Dorset coast later this month.

Background:

Care home vaccination follow-ups

News story

How to contact us if your care home in England with older residents has not yet been offered the COVID-19 vaccine.



The COVID-19 vaccine has now been offered to residents at every eligible care home with older residents across England. Nurses, GPs and other NHS staff have offered the life-saving jab to people living at more than 10,000 care homes with older residents.

The small remainder have had their visits deferred by local directors of public health for safety reasons during a local outbreak. Those homes will be visited and vaccinated as soon as NHS staff are allowed to do so.

We're advising any care home in England with older residents who have not yet been visited to contact us to ensure vaccinations can be offered as soon as possible.

Eligible care home managers should email covidvaccineasc@dhsc.gov.uk.

Published 1 February 2021

Appointment of John Raine as new Chair of the Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission

Press release

John Raine CMG OBE has been appointed as new Chair of the Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission.



John Raine CMG OBE served the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office for 33 years. His overseas postings included Kuwait, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Baghdad and Islamabad. As a senior member of the national security community, John's bilateral and multilateral diplomatic work involved working extensively with US administrations and the US military on issues related to international coordination and security.

John is now a Senior Advisor at the IISS (International Institute for Strategic Affairs), and a non-executive director of the HSBC Bank of the Middle East. He is also the Deputy Chairman of the Board of Governors for the University of Lincoln, and serves as a Trustee for the HALO Trust.

The Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission, a non-departmental public body, is accountable to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. The Commission is responsible for the Marshall Scholarship programme, which provides scholarships to talented Americans to study in the UK. Up to fifty scholars are selected each year to study in any field at graduate level at a UK institution. As future leaders, with a lasting understanding of the UK's institutions and society, Marshall Scholars strengthen the enduring relationship between the UK and the USA, their governments, their institutions and their people.

[Marshall Scholarship](#)

Published 1 February 2021

[UK announces sanctions against Zimbabwe security chiefs](#)

- UK announces first set of designations of individuals under the UK's Zimbabwe sanctions regime

- Human rights violations in 2019 saw protestors killed for expressing right to free speech and protest
- Sanctions go hand-in-hand with UK efforts to hold the Government of Zimbabwe to account and to make good on its promise to deliver much-needed crucial reforms.

Four Zimbabwean security sector chiefs responsible for serious human rights violations – including the deaths of 23 Zimbabwean protestors – have been designated under the UK's new autonomous sanctions regime, UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab announced today.

Today's announcement ensures these individuals cannot freely travel to the UK, channel money through UK banks or profit from our economy. These restrictive measures are not targeted at, nor intended to impact, the wider economy and the people of Zimbabwe.

Following the UK's departure from the European Union and the end of the Transition Period, the UK can now pursue an independent sanctions policy reflecting our foreign policy and national security interests. Today's designations are the first the UK has made of individuals under the UK's Zimbabwe autonomous sanctions regime, which came into force at 11pm on 31 December 2020.

The new sanctions include a travel ban and asset freeze on four officials:

- Owen Ncube, Minister for State Security;
- Isaac Moyo, Director General of the Central Intelligence Organisation;
- Godwin Matanga, Commissioner General of the Zimbabwe Republic Police; and
- Anselem Sanyatwe, former Brigadier General, Commander of the Presidential Guard and Tactical Commander of the National Reaction Force.

These targeted designations hold to account those responsible for the worst human rights violations against the people of Zimbabwe since President Emmerson Mnangagwa took power in November 2017. This includes a state-sponsored crackdown against protests in January 2019 that resulted in the deaths of 17 Zimbabweans and post-election violence in August 2018 in which six protestors lost their lives.

Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab said:

These sanctions send a clear message that we will hold to account those responsible for the most egregious human rights violations, including the deaths of innocent Zimbabweans.

These sanctions target senior individuals in the Government, and not ordinary Zimbabweans. We will continue to press for the necessary political and economic reforms that will benefit all Zimbabweans.

The UK's autonomous Zimbabwe sanctions regime seeks to encourage the Government of Zimbabwe to respect democratic principles and institutions; refrain from the repression of civil society; and to comply with international human rights law and to respect human rights.

These sanctions are in addition to our work to hold the Government of Zimbabwe to account in implementing genuine political and economic reforms that benefit all Zimbabweans.

Contrary to claims by those who seek to stop institutional reform and respect for human rights in Zimbabwe, these sanctions will not deter investment into the country. Instead, UK investors repeatedly highlight three concerns that prevent them from investing in Zimbabwe: poorly-managed currency; arbitrary property rights and the legal system.

We will continue to support the Zimbabwean people through our aid programme, focusing on tackling poverty, humanitarian assistance, standing up for human rights and supporting Zimbabwe's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. None of this aid goes directly through Government of Zimbabwe systems.

Notes to Editors:

1. The UK Zimbabwe Autonomous Regime comprises targeted travel bans and asset freezes, as well as trade restrictions on military items and items that could be used for internal repression. The regime came fully into force on 31 December 2020 at the end of the EU transition period. This is the first time that the UK has used its autonomous Zimbabwe sanctions regime to impose travel bans and asset freezes against individuals. You can find a link to the legislation [here](#). This is a different sanctions regime to the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regulations 2020 which launched in July 2020.
 2. The Motlanthe Commission report found that the Zimbabwean security services were responsible for 6 deaths and 35 injuries during the 1 August 2018 protests. The report also concluded that the use of live ammunition on civilians was "clearly unjustified and disproportionate".
 3. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission's January 28 2019 report on the response to the January 2019 fuel protests found that law enforcement agents seemed to "resort to use of brute, excessive and disproportionate force in most circumstances thereby causing avoidable loss of life and also worsening the situation", resulting in the deaths of 17 people. A Human Rights Watch report details allegations of rape and indiscriminate door-to-door raids by the Zimbabwean security services.
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Over 30 years of the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme

For over 30 years the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme has helped victims of crime get justice.

The scheme was launched in 1989 following public outcry over a series of controversial sentencing decisions, including the 1986 'Ealing vicarage rape' case where 21-year-old Jill Saward was raped by burglars at her father's vicarage.

The first ULS hearing took place in July 1989. In this case, a man who committed incest on his daughter had his sentence doubled from 3 to 6 years in prison. The scheme has since helped thousands of victims and their families get justice, and in an important hearing last year two of the UK's most prolific rapists – Joseph McCann and Reynhard Sinaga – had their sentences increased by 10 years, meaning that both offenders should now serve at least 40 years in prison before they can be released.

In 2019 alone, 63 offenders had their sentences increased under the scheme – 16 of those were given custodial sentences after avoiding prison time at their original sentencing.

Since it launched, the scheme has been expanded 6 times and now includes a range of terror-related offences, all serious sexual offences, threats to kill, child cruelty, people trafficking and modern slavery, and many racially and religiously aggravated offences. Most recently, sexual offences involving an abuse of trust, indecent images offences and domestic abuse offences were added to the scheme.

Commenting on the anniversary, Attorney General, the Rt. Hon. Suella Braverman QC MP said:

For over 30 years, the ULS scheme has helped victims of crime and their loved ones get justice. The scheme includes many more offences now than it did when it was first launched, allowing us to look at more sentences which don't appear to fit the crime.

In the vast majority of cases, judges get it right, but the scheme is important to ensure that certain cases can be reviewed where there may have been a gross error in the sentencing decision.

The ULS scheme allows prosecutors, victims of crime and members of the public to ask for certain Crown Court sentences to be reviewed by the Law Officers if they think the sentence is far too low. Some cases referred to the Court of Appeal can also offer guidance for future sentencing decisions.

Anyone can ask for a sentence to be reviewed if they think it is too low, and only one person needs to ask for it to be considered. Further requests do not lend any extra weight as the decision to refer a sentence as too low can only be based on the legal threshold. The Law Officers have 28 days from the date of sentencing to refer a case to the Court of Appeal, so it's important for them to receive a referral as early as possible in order to properly consider a case.

Notes to editors

1. Information on the scheme can be found [here](#).
2. The ULS scheme came into force on 1 February 1989 and was legislated for within the Criminal Justice Act 1988.
3. Under the ULS scheme a case must be referred to the Court of Appeal within 28 days of the date of sentencing. This deadline cannot be extended and in order to ensure we have time to properly consider a case we ask that referrals are made early in the process. It is very difficult to consider a case which is submitted late and it is not possible to do so outside of working hours.
4. The Law Officers act independently of Government when deciding on Unduly Lenient Sentences, also known as acting as 'Guardian of the public interest'.
5. The 2019 annual statistics can be found [here](#).
6. The 2020 annual statistics will be published later this year when the outcome of all cases referred to the Law Officers in 2020 is known.