

Elephant tusks seized by Border Force during international operation against wildlife crime

During the month-long Operation Thunder, Border Force officers at ports and airports made 178 seizures containing thousands of products regulated under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). These included elephant tusks and other ivory goods, live corals and reptile skin products. Border Force also made a number of non-CITES seizures including heroin, cocaine, cannabis and cigarettes.

The international operation was co-led by the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and INTERPOL and involved police, customs, environment, wildlife and forestry agencies from 111 countries. The aim was to focus enforcement activities on criminal groups, leading to the disruption of organised wildlife trafficking.

Chris Philp, Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts, said:

The trade in endangered species is driven by organised crime groups and the movement of banned animal products is key to how they operate.

This is why Border Force's specialist officers will continue their vital work at the border to prevent the importation and exportation of endangered animals and plants, as well as working alongside enforcement partners such as the National Wildlife Crime Unit, and police from across the UK to eradicate this ruthless and exploitative trade.

Worldwide, Operation Thunder ran from 14 September to 11 October, leading to the seizure of, among other items, 1.3 tonnes of ivory, more than one tonne of Pangolin scales, 1,400 live turtles and 1,800 reptiles.

Border Force officers at ports and airports across the UK have intensified their enforcement activity to coincide with the international operation. UK seizures included:

- elephant tusks and ivory goods
- cacti *Astrophytum asterias* (which is in the highest CITES protection category)
- queen Conch Pearl
- Brazilian Rosewood furniture (*Dalbergia nigra*)
- mounted Butterflies
- agarwood products (Oud)

- live Corals
- reptile skin products
- health/ beauty supplements containing Cactus, Orchid and Crocodile blood.

Non-CITES UK seizures included:

- two kilos of heroin from Tanzania to The Netherlands
- 174,400 sildenafil tablets from India to the UK
- over 100,000 cigarettes
- 2.5 kilos of heroin from Kenya to The Netherlands
- 28 kilos of cannabis from South Africa to the UK
- 500 gms cocaine from Nigeria to India
- 500 gms cocaine from Ghana to Australia
- 8 kilos of dried Khat from Kenya to Sweden
- other class B and C drugs

Border Force is responsible for frontline detection and seizure of items covered by the CITES convention, which tackles the illegal trade in endangered animals and plants. The Heathrow-based Border Force CITES team are specialist officers who are recognised as world leaders in their field.

Anyone with information about smuggling or trafficking should contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 anonymously or visit <http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org>

Overspeeding incident at Dauntsey, Wiltshire

At about 16:07 hrs on Wednesday 12 August, a Great Western Railway (GWR) service from London to Bristol travelled at around 117 mph (188 km/h) over an emergency speed restriction (ESR) of 20 mph (32 km/h), near Dauntsey, Wiltshire. This incident did not result in any damage or injury.

GWR notified RAIB of this incident soon after it occurred. We have since gathered evidence from the railway industry and from witnesses, and carried out a preliminary examination of the incident.

An ESR had been in place on the down main line at Dauntsey since 27 June 2020. The line speed in the area is 125 mph (201 km/h). This restriction, for a track defect (a geometry fault known as cyclic top) over a length of about 100 metres, was to 30 mph (48 km/h) for freight trains only. The signs indicated a differential speed restriction of 30/125 mph (30 mph for freight trains and 125 mph for passenger trains).

On the day of the incident the weather was very warm, and at 13:55 hrs local

track maintenance staff imposed a restriction of 20 mph (32 km/h) for all trains over the same length of line, because a critical rail temperature had been reached. In accordance with the railway Rule Book, trains were stopped and cautioned by the signaller until 15:52 hrs, when revised lineside signage was put in place.

The first train to pass over the section of line after this was the 15:12 hrs service from London Paddington to Bristol Temple Meads. The driver of this train had booked on for duty at 14:36 hrs at the GWR depot at Paddington. When he booked on he was issued with a hard copy of a notice advising him of the ESRs currently in force on the lines which he would be driving over. This included the ESR at Dauntsey, which he noted. He was aware that this ESR was in force as he had driven over it several times in the previous few days, but it did not require the passenger trains that he drove to reduce speed.

Network Rail did not inform GWR of the revised ESR at this location until 16:33 hrs. The driver had no means of knowing that the ESR at Dauntsey had been changed earlier that afternoon, and that his train would be required to reduce speed to 20 mph (32 km/h). He therefore took no action when the flashing emergency speed indicator came into view. The automatic train protection (ATP) system had not been modified to take account of the changes to the ESR, because they were not likely to be in effect for more than a few hours, so the driver received no warning from ATP that a reduction in speed would be required.

When the driver saw the ESR warning board, he did not register that 30 mph had become 20 mph. However, he did notice the absence of any 125 board below the 20. He assumed this had become displaced, and after a momentary brake application, the train continued at speed for about 37 seconds, covering over one mile (1.6 km), until the driver was able to read the 20 mph board at the point where the ESR started. At this point the train was travelling at 117 mph (188 km/h). The driver then made a full service brake application. This reduced the speed of the train to around 105 mph (169 km/h) by the time it had passed clear of the affected section of line. The driver then reported the incident by radio to the signaller, saying that he believed some of the ESR signage was missing. The boards in place were checked and found to be correct. The ESR for critical rail temperature was removed at 19:07 hrs on the same day.

We have reviewed the findings of this preliminary examination and have decided not to carry out any further investigation of the incident. RAIB has previously made recommendations in our investigation into the similar incident at Sandy on the East Coast Main Line on 19 October 2018 ([RAIB report 10/2019](#)), which cover topics which are relevant to the incident at Dauntsey. Recommendation 1 was that train operating companies should review their practice in relation to drivers' prior awareness of ESRs. The information which the GWR driver was provided with was in accordance with the intent of this recommendation, as far as the company was able to do, at the time the driver booked on. Recommendation 2 was that the rail industry should consider and review options for a safe and suitable means of providing drivers with warning of emergency speed restrictions on the route ahead through the use of available technologies.

This incident is an example of circumstances in which a warning of an ESR ahead would be valuable. The driver was misled by the way the lineside information was presented, which did not sufficiently highlight that the existing ESR had been modified such that passenger trains were now affected. The 30/125 ESR had been allowed to remain in place for some time without being converted to a Temporary Speed Restriction (TSR), which would have changed the information presented to the driver on this occasion and made it more likely that he would have responded to a newly-imposed ESR arising from the hot weather.

We have written to Network Rail and RSSB, copied to the Office Rail and Road, to alert them to this event and the circumstances surrounding the application of the speed restriction. We have also brought the need for action to implement the previous relevant recommendations to their attention.

[Professor Francis Livens to join the NDA board](#)

News story

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) today announced that the Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP has appointed Professor Francis Livens to its board for a 3-year term from 1 December.



Professor Francis Livens

Image credit: Professor Francis Livens

Francis Livens is Professor of Radiochemistry and Director of The University of Manchester's Dalton Nuclear Institute.

Dr Ros Rivaz, NDA Chair, said:

I am delighted that Francis is joining the NDA board. He is one of the UK's leading nuclear experts and has extensive knowledge of the nuclear sector in the UK and internationally. I look forward to working together with him.

Professor Livens said:

I am hugely excited and privileged to be joining the NDA's board. The UK is at the leading edge of nuclear decommissioning and I am pleased to be able to help take this important work forward.

Professor Livens brings a wide range of nuclear and leadership experience to the NDA. He has held a number of senior positions in universities and research institutes. He is a member of the Nuclear Innovation & Research Advisory Board advising Government, as well as the Office of Nuclear Regulation Independent Advisory Panel. He has also performed numerous other important advisory roles in the UK and internationally, as a recognised expert in radiochemistry in particular plutonium and nuclear materials.

As Director of the Dalton Nuclear Institute, he is responsible for coordination of nuclear research and education across The University of Manchester. He is particularly focused on the linkages between Science & Engineering and Humanities, addressing the societal, cultural and organisational aspects of implementing nuclear technologies in modern societies. He is also Nuclear Theme Champion at the Henry Royce Institute.

Professor Livens has over 35 years of experience in nuclear research, working closely with industry and government. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society for Chemistry and Member of the Institute of Strategic Studies. As well as teaching undergraduates and post graduate courses, Professor Livens has supervised over 60 PhD students and postdoctoral researchers. He has published over 200 peer reviewed articles in scientific journals.

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Asbestos removal in and around Grenfell Tower: write-up and Q&A from 21 September 2020 online event

In early July, we published and sent out [information about upcoming safety works](#) in and close to Grenfell Tower. As part of this work, asbestos will be carefully removed from the Tower in secure conditions. The Tower is safe, and

these works will ensure its stability until a decision is made about its future.

At an online event on 21 September, panel members – including a member of the Grenfell Tower site management team and one of the external contractors responsible for safety on site – took questions from the community. These questions have been summarised, grouped into themes and responded to in this document.

If you were unable to attend the online event, you can watch the event video on the MHCLG YouTube channel:

[Grenfell Tower safety works event on 21 September 2020](#)

36th Universal Periodic Review: UK statement on the United States



Thank you, Madam President.

The UK welcomes US engagement with the UPR, its action to tackle modern slavery – including anti-trafficking legislation signed into law over the past four years – and strong US support for media freedom internationally. We

also welcome the recent steps taken on policing reform, including the Executive Order on “Safe Policing for Safe Communities”.

We recommend that the United States:

1. Ratify the 2014 ILO Protocol, to the Forced Labour Convention.
2. Clarify its approach, to ensuring access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.
3. Work with state and local government, on best practice for the use of force by police, and on improving the relationships between law enforcement, and the communities they serve.

Thank you, Madam President.

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