

Attorney General extends undertaking for Grenfell Tower Inquiry

Acting in her role as guardian of the public interest, the Attorney General Suella Braverman QC MP has extended the undertaking she granted to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

In broad terms, the extension to the undertaking means legal persons cannot refuse to answer questions on the basis that to do so would risk self-incrimination, which is a right granted to them in law. It also means that their answers cannot be used in evidence in any future prosecution against them. However, the undertaking does not provide any form of immunity from prosecution to any person whatsoever.

A legal person is an entity which, like an individual person, has its own legal obligations and rights. Examples of what can amount to a legal person include a limited liability partnership or an incorporated company.

In making the decision, the Attorney General took into consideration all representations received including those from victims and their representatives, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Metropolitan Police. She has since concluded that extending the undertaking will not jeopardise the police investigation or the prospects of a future criminal prosecution.

The Attorney General believes that the undertaking is needed to enable the Inquiry to continue to hear vital evidence about the circumstances and causes of the fire. Without it she has concluded that some witnesses would be likely to decline giving evidence.

Commenting on her decision, the Attorney General said:

“The bereaved, survivors and their relatives have been very much in my mind in making my decision and I hope that the extension to the undertaking helps them to find the truth about the circumstances of the fire.

It is important to know that I am granting the extension in the knowledge that it will not jeopardise any future criminal investigation or prosecution and that it does not offer anyone immunity from prosecution.”

A factsheet on the undertaking is attached. [Factsheet on Undertaking Extension provided by the Attorney General](#) (PDF, 357KB, 2 pages)

Fish start to spawn again after successful restoration work

The Environment Agency, Sudbury and Long Melford Angling Association, and Sudbury Common Lands Charity, [worked together from 2018 to 2019 on the River Stour at Friars Meadow in Sudbury.](#)

The partnership work, which cost almost £10,000 and was funded by fishing licence money, involved creating spawning areas, large scale removal of silt and vegetation and tree surgery.

The spawning areas created now have huge numbers of roach and rudd spawning in it. Before the project that area of the river was heavy with silt and vegetation.

Not only has this work increased the fish population it has also improved the water quality.

A picture of Friars Meadow before the work was carried out.

The shelter in the spawning areas will benefit recruitment on this section of the river. Recruitment in this context is the number of younger fish making it to adulthood, this has improved as the shelter reduces the risk of them being eaten.

Ben Norrington, Environment Agency fisheries officer in East Anglia, said: "We are really pleased that the project has been a success.

"I hope this highlights to fisheries owners the importance of spawning areas and shallow diverse river habitats for fish and wildlife.

"These results are a good indication of well spent fishing licence income and partnership involvement."

During the vegetation clearance.

John Weddup, from Sudbury and Long Melford Angling Association, said:

"The whole project has been fantastic, it has been great working with the Environment Agency.

"We now have fish spawning around the whole island rather than being limited to one spot, which they were before the work.

"The water also has a higher levels of oxygen now which helps everything from biodiversity, fish and insects. The whole river is improving since the work and this benefits everyone not just anglers."

Friars Meadow after completed work.

Adrian Walters, from Sudbury Common Lands Charity, said:

“Not only has the project been good for spawning fish it is also excellent for damsel and dragonflies and nesting warblers in the marginal vegetation.

“I saw a cuckoo drop into the reeds and reappear – presumably having laid an egg in a reed warbler’s nest.”

Friars Meadow after completed work.

This work wouldn’t be possible without the funding from fishing licences. Make sure you have purchased yours here: <https://www.gov.uk/fishing-licences>

[Four new appointments to the Natural England board](#)

Rosamund Blomfield-Smith, Kim Shillinglaw, Kerry ten Kate and Peter Unwin have been appointed for three years commencing 1 June 2020.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

Natural England has a crucial role to play as we deliver our pledge to leave the environment in a better state for future generations.

The new board members bring a breadth of experience and knowledge that will be invaluable in our mission to protect and restore England’s nature and landscapes.

Natural England chair Tony Juniper said:

A healthy natural environment is an essential national asset and the Board of Natural England has a vital role in supporting our organisation as it helps achieve ambitious Government goals, such as those set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan, the agenda for net zero climate emissions and the national woodland expansion target.

I very much look forward to working with our new Board Members, making the most of their experience and skills to drive our new strategy for nature recovery.

Rosamund Blomfield-Smith spent thirty years in the City, latterly as a director of both Rothschilds and ING Barings, but since 2003 has been non-executive. She has served on boards, including Thames Water and Hartpury Agricultural College, and is currently chairman of Museum of London Archaeology, a member of Ofgem's Challenge Group, and chairman of Ofcom's Independent Advisory Group.

Kim Shillinglaw is a senior media executive. She has led the commercial transformation of businesses as Director of Factual at EndemolShine, modernised TV channels as Controller of BBC2 and BBC4, and initiated content from Stargazing Live to Blue Planet II as Head of Science and Natural History Commissioning.

Kerry ten Kate is an independent consultant, advising governments, companies, banks and civil society organisations on how best to integrate the natural environment into economic decision-making. She is a trustee of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, a member of IUCN's Species Survival Commission and of the Aldersgate Group and Conservation Fellow at the Zoological Society of London. She is a former member of the Natural Capital Committee.

Peter Unwin is an ex-civil servant with ten years Board level experience as Director General at Defra and DCLG and a spell as acting Permanent Secretary at Defra. After leaving the Civil Service in 2015 he spent four years as Chief Executive of the Whitehall & Industry Group, an independent charity promoting leadership development and understanding between government, industry and the not for profit sector.

Board members play an important role in supporting and encouraging the executive team in improving Natural England's delivery for the natural environment by driving forward substantial change to deliver value for money, excellent customer service and better collaboration with key partners while maintaining a clear overview, and ensuring business continuity, across the range of its functions.

Natural England plays a key role in delivering Government's environmental priorities. Its general purpose is to ensure the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Natural England forms part of the Defra Group and as a non-departmental public body it has its own independent powers and statutory duties; exercising advisory and regulatory responsibilities at arm's length from Ministers. Natural England is accountable to Defra's Secretary of State for the delivery of its objectives.

All appointments to the Natural England Board are made on merit and political

activity plays no part in the selection process.

[COP26 President at opening of June Momentum for Climate Change](#)

COP26 President Alok Sharma spoke today (1 June 2020) at the opening ceremony of the [June Momentum for Climate Change](#), a series of online events hosted by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

UN Deputy Secretary General Amina J. Mohammed, UNFCCC Executive Secretary Patricia Espinosa, COP25 President Minister Carolina Schmidt, and [Subsidiary Body](#) Chairs Marianne Karlsen and Tosi Mpanu Mpanu were also part of the panel for the online event.

Well, Melinda thank you very much for that and thank you for channelling Winston Churchill in your introductory remarks.

Firstly, let me just thank our presiding officers Marianne Karlsen and of course Ambassador Tosi Mpanu-Mpanu for convening this June Momentum for Climate Change as well as of course Patricia and the UNFCCC Secretariat for all their work in making this happen.

You're absolutely right, I do have two hats that I come to, they're actually I don't believe mutually exclusive at all, they're indeed complimentary. But, right now, the immediate focus of course has been on fighting the coronavirus pandemic in terms of the economic support that we're providing to businesses to safeguard jobs, so not just lives but also livelihoods across our country and I do believe the package of measures the UK has put in place are substantial and on an international level favourable.

But of course every country right now will be focused on this, but I think as many colleagues have already said is that what we mustn't do is of course lose sight of the huge challenges of climate change itself.

And I'm positive about us coming out of this with a green recovery, I mean what we've shown in the UK is that we've managed to grow our economy, our GDP, by 75% between 1990 and 2018 and at the same time we've managed to cut emissions by 43%, so I sincerely believe it's absolutely possible to have green growth in our economies across the world.

And of course, how we rebuild our economies is going to have a really profound impact, in terms of our society's future sustainability, in terms of our resilience, indeed the wellbeing of individuals across the globe and COP26 can actually be that moment when the world unites behind a green and I think – really importantly – a fair recovery.

As you know we've now got new dates agreed for COP26. I want to thank all colleagues we've taken part in coming to that particular agreement and of course we're working on an ambitious roadmap with partners in the lead up to November 2021.

I'm absolutely committed in keeping the dialogue going, I think it's great that we're continuing to hold these events and I will stop at that point, I'll have a chance in a few minutes to set out our ambitions on the road to COP26 but thank you so much for holding this event, it's so vital as we move forward

Thank you very much for that and it's good to see Selwin is also channelling Winston Churchill and I'm looking forward to the next time we meet to come with my own inspiring quote from Winston Churchill.

Look, as I said, I want to thank all our colleagues: the COP Bureau, our Italian Partners, and everyone who's worked with us in arriving at the new dates for COP26. It gives us a very clear destination and I think that was always very important for us.

And of course, we all understand the extraordinary circumstances that we're in, as to why we've had to postpone COP26 but again I just want to echo the words of other colleagues here is that we're absolutely not postponing action on tackling climate change. Patricia, Selwin have made this point very eloquently and as indeed did Minister Carolina Schmidt and she repeated some of what she said at the Petersberg Dialogue, which is so important, where she made clear that the climate crisis hasn't taken time off but, and I think this is the positive piece, there is still time for us collectively to define the future.

And I can tell you as the incoming Presidency we're absolutely committed to working with all parties and stakeholders to accelerate climate action this year and of course in 2021 leading up to November.

And what we want ahead of COP26 is for all countries to be submitting these ambitious NDCs, committing to further cuts in carbon emissions by 2030. We want countries to set out those longer-term visions for emissions reductions, for ambitious long-term strategies, and actually to step up action to help the most vulnerable in society to adapt to the changing climate.

Developed countries absolutely have to meet and move beyond this totemic \$100bn per year climate finance goal. And of course we need to make progress in other areas as colleagues will know, there are five areas we are particularly focused on in relation to COP26: firstly, that transition to green energy; secondly, clean transport; thirdly, nature-based solutions which is so vital and allied with everything else we're doing; adaptation and resilience; and, of course, finance, which ties all of this together.

And we will seek to progress all the issues mandated for discussion within the UNFCCC process and let me give this commitment that I will be working very closely with our partners, Italy, with the Chilean COP25 Presidency and

of course the future African Presidency of COP27, the UNFCCC and more broadly the UN family and indeed all Parties and stakeholders to accelerate this action on climate change we all want to see.

And I do want us to pursue a package that absolutely unleashes the full potential of the Paris Agreement and powers the UNFCCC process forward. We're totally committed to delivering on a really ambitious, inclusive COP26 and we want to make sure that, actually, the voices who are most affected by climate change are also heard very, very loudly.

By the way we have managed to show that even in very difficult circumstances we can continue our cooperation as we're doing today. My team has been consulting with hundreds of parties or their representatives, as well as stakeholders around the world. Many of us have taken part in events, such as the Petersberg Dialogue, the Placencia Forum, and of course I think as Patricia said we've all come to appreciate 'lemons' but it's also worth pointing out that we hope that we can return to some, when we return to some semblance of normality we can also meet physically because that is absolutely vital as we continue our dialogue.

And in the crucial stretch of time leading up to COP26, we're going to work with all the Parties to make progress in the negotiations, including amongst others the 52nd meeting of the Subsidiary Bodies in October and of course the UN General Assembly annual meeting. And we do want to have a roadmap which we've been discussing with colleagues which sets out our ambitions to COP26. We're going to work through a whole range of multi-lateral and regional events, the G7, the G20 meetings, the World Bank annual meetings, and of course the CBD COP in China.

And we want to bring together not just countries, but also non-state actors and other stakeholders and we want to do this starting with the IEA Clean Energy Transitions Summit, which I very much hope to attend next month.

And we will use our position as incoming Presidency to convene parties at the highest levels to make progress at key moments between now and November next year.

So what I would say to you ladies and gentlemen, friends if I can call you that, which many of you already are, and I've said this before but it is absolutely the case that whether we live in the South, the North, the East or the West we do share this one, fragile, life-giving planet and of course we have a shared hope for a prosperous future.

Working together, I think we can make progress faster towards that clean, resilient recovery that we all want to see and I look forward to welcoming you to COP26 but also working with you very closely in terms of the drumbeat of action needed leading up to November next year. Thank you.

The June Momentum for Climate Change takes place from 1 to 10 June 2020 and offers an opportunity for Parties and other stakeholders to continue exchanging views and sharing information in order to maintain momentum in the

UNFCCC process and to showcase how climate action is progressing under the special circumstances the world is currently facing.

[New £300-million contract paves the way for Veterans UK digital transformation](#)

News story

The way many of Veterans UK services are delivered is to be digitised as part of a new contract worth £300-million that successfully commenced on 1 June 2020.



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The 7 year contract will enable Veterans UK and other parts of our parent organisation, MOD Defence Business Services (DBS), to transform the way we deliver military personnel pay and administration, veterans pensions and related services. Working closely with the new the supplier, Shared Services Connected Limited (SSCL), we will deliver a range of digitally-enabled services that supports digital transformation across our services.

Some of the benefits the new contract will bring are:

- providing an enhanced Veterans Portal and modern channels of access including new digital and interactive platforms such as online claiming
- our back-office systems will be replaced allowing us to deliver pensions and compensation services in a more accessible, digitally enhanced way.

Andy Dowds, Head of Veterans UK said:

We are all eagerly awaiting the Transformation that this new contract with SSCL will bring to Veterans UK. We have a brilliant opportunity to truly move our Veterans services into the digital age, providing easy access for customers and staff alike.

We are starting from a low technological base and will move quickly through to a fully digital service. There is much hard work to do but I know that our people and SSCL staff are ready to rise to the challenge.

Our plans will take several years to deliver but we are starting work straight away. In the meantime, please be reassured that all Veterans UK's services and payments will continue as normal and please continue to contact us via the usual contact points.

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