

Press release: Readout of Foreign Secretary call with Rex Tillerson

The Foreign Secretary and Secretary of State had an in-depth constructive discussion on developments in Iran and the protests there. They agreed on the importance of the right of freedom of expression. They also agreed that human rights in Iran needed to be fully respected in handling the demonstrations and undertook to monitor the situation closely. The Foreign Secretary reiterated the UK's ongoing commitment to the Iran nuclear deal and to working with our allies and partners to address Iran's destabilising activities in the region.

On the crises in the Middle East, they discussed the importance of moving forward on a process aiming at a political settlement in Yemen and the need to reinvigorate the political process on Syria.

They also agreed to maintain the pressure on North Korea to end their illegal nuclear programme.

Further information

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Press release: 91% of Basic Payment Scheme claims in England paid in December

More than 76,500 (91%) of farmers in England received their 2017 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) money by the end of December.

RPA Chief Executive Paul Caldwell said:

We understand how important BPS payments are to farmers and their businesses. That's why RPA staff have worked really hard to get money into bank accounts in the first month of the payment window, injecting just over £1.45 billion into the farming and wider rural economy. I'm very grateful to them for all their work so far.

We know there are still farmers waiting for payments and will make them as soon as we can. This month we will communicate directly with those farmers who are still to be paid to help them plan.

BPS payments are made direct to bank accounts so farmers should make sure RPA has the most up-to-date account details. Once a payment has been made a remittance advice is sent in the post, confirming the amount paid. A claim statement will also be sent to explain how payments have been worked out.

More information on BPS 2017, including scheme rules and details of how payments are calculated, is available at [GOV.UK/rpa/bps2017](https://gov.uk/rpa/bps2017).

News story: Geography skills across government recognised by new role

The Government Science and Engineering (GSE) profession is pleased to announce the appointment of a new cross-government Head of Geography for the profession, David Wood.

David will be helping to continue to implement the action plan of the [GSE strategy](#) and championing the breadth of work undertaken by geographers and recognising their contribution to analysis, delivery and policy formulation across government.

This appointment has been made by the Central Government Geographers Group with the support of the Interim Head of GSE profession and Interim Government Chief Scientific Adviser, [Chris Whitty](#) and the [Royal Geographical Society](#) (with Institute of British Geographers).

Press release: Boston man faces hefty fine for fishing without a licence

Our fisheries enforcement officers patrol rivers and lakes to check fishing licences

The Environment Agency is reminding anglers of the importance of having a fishing licence, after a Boston man was ordered to pay more than £600 for fishing without one.

Aivis Putnins, aged 32, of St Bedes Drive, Boston, was proved guilty in absence at Northampton Magistrates' Court on 21 December 2017.

The defendant was found to be using unlicensed fishing instruments on the River Witham, Boston, on 20 August 2017, in breach of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act (1975).

Following the verdict, Steve Powell, Enforcement Team manager for the Environment Agency, said:

It's important that all anglers understand how seriously the courts take these offences and we hope it will act as a deterrent for any angler thinking of fishing without a licence.

All the money raised from licence sales is used to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries, benefitting anglers. Those cheating the system will be prosecuted.

Every year across the country, thousands of anglers are prosecuted by the Environment Agency for not having a fishing licence. The agency and its partners work to catch illegal anglers in the act.

As well as swindling other anglers, fishing illegally can harm wildlife and carries a hefty penalty. Getting caught without a licence could land you with a fine of up to £2,500.

Any angler aged 12 or over, fishing on a river, canal or still water needs a licence. An annual licence costs from just £30 (concessions available) and is available from GOV.UK or by calling the Environment Agency on 0344 800 5386 between 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday.

Anyone with information about illegal fishing activities can contact the Environment Agency Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555 111. Notes to editors:

Mr Aivis Putnins was ordered to pay a fine of £440, costs of £171, and a victim surcharge of £44. The total penalty was £611.

[News story: Cross-border portability of online content services](#)

The IPO launched a consultation on its proposed approach to [enforcement of the EU Portability Regulation](#) which ends on the 31 January 2018.

From 1 April 2018, online streaming services will be required to allow EU based subscribers access to paid-for content when temporarily in another EU Member State, for example when on holiday. Free services and those tied to the payment of licence fees, (for example BBC iPlayer) can offer this service but are not obliged to. Service providers are not allowed to impose an additional charge to provide portable services or to take steps to decrease the quality of the service in other Member States.

The [Regulation](#) contains a number of safeguards to ensure copyright is protected. For example, providers must verify the Member State of residence of subscribers to ensure they are entitled to receive content. A failure to verify subscribers may result in copyright infringement.

Appropriate enforcement mechanisms need to be in place in UK law when the Portability Regulation comes into effect. We have considered how to provide this and our proposed approach is outlined in the technical consultation.

Questions on the consultation process should be directed to portability@ipo.gov.uk.