

## [Paul Nuttall has condemned the US missile strikes on Syria as 'Trigger Happy'](#)

Paul Nuttall, the UKIP leader has condemned the missile attack on Syria as, “rash, trigger happy, nonsensical and will achieve nothing.”



“The whole world rightly condemns the use of chemical weapons in Syria, but the US attack on the Assad regime does nothing to lower tensions, nor will it hasten peace in that country.

“Too often rash responses to horrific situations are about the conscience of the attacker, rather than a clear-headed response to an awful situation.

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## [Press release: Bishop of Sheffield: Peter Wilcox](#)

The Queen has approved the nomination of the Very Reverend Peter Jonathan Wilcox, MA, DPhil, Dean of Liverpool, in the diocese of Liverpool, for election as Bishop of Sheffield in succession to the Right Reverend Steven John Lindsey Croft, MA, PhD, on his translation to the See of Oxford on 6 July 2016.

The Very Reverend Dr Pete Wilcox, aged 55, studied history at Saint John's College, Durham.

He trained for the ordained ministry at Ridley Hall, Cambridge and served his title at Preston-on-Tees, in the diocese of Durham from 1987 to 1990.

From 1990 to 1993, while completing a doctorate at St John's College, Oxford, he was Non-Stipendiary Minister at Saint Margaret with Saint Philip and Saint James, with Saint Giles in the Diocese of Oxford. From 1993 to 1998 he was Team Vicar in the Parish of Gateshead, in the diocese of Durham, and Director of the Cranmer Hall Urban Mission Centre. From 1998 to 2006 he was Priest-in-Charge at Saint Paul's at the Crossing, Walsall in the diocese of Lichfield and then Canon Residentiary at Lichfield Cathedral between 2006 and 2012.

Since 2012 he has been Dean of Liverpool.

Pete is married to the novelist Catherine Fox, who lectures in creative writing at the Manchester Writing School at Manchester Metropolitan University. They have 2 adult sons: Jon, who is married to Izzy, and Tom, who is engaged to Rosa.

He has a mildly obsessive interest in all ball sports, especially (as a fan of Newcastle United) football. He is the author of 3 books, including 'Living the Dream: Joseph for Today' (Paternoster, 2007).

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## [Press release: Fish stocks boost for endangered pearl mussel](#)

Thousands of sea trout have been released into rivers in Northumberland to stock rivers for anglers and help protect the future of a critically endangered species, the freshwater pearl mussel.

Pearl fishing and water pollution from industry have led to worldwide decline of the pearl mussel.

A healthy population of endangered freshwater pearl mussels is important for water quality – each mussel filters 50 to 70 litres of water. They improve the quality of the habitat, increasing the ecological diversity, which includes juvenile trout and salmon numbers.

The Environment Agency's Kielder Salmon Centre staff Richard Bond and Jess Anson have developed a technique to enable pearl mussel larvae to attach to the fish gills, replicating their natural life cycle in the wild.

The larvae will drop off the sea trout gills towards the end of May where they will settle on to the river bed. Given the right conditions, these juveniles could survive into adulthood and live for up to 100 years.

Close up of pearl mussel larvae (white dots) attached to the sea trout gills

Around 12,000 one-year-old sea trout, which have been bred at Kielder Salmon Centre, were released this week into North Tyne tributaries of the River Tyne.

The larvae attached to them were harvested from 80 adult mussels which are cared for at the centre.

Kielder Salmon Centre breeds 360,000 salmon and between 10,000 and 20,000 sea trout every year to stock rivers.

## **Complex life cycle**

Richard said:

The pearl mussel has a complex life cycle which begins as larvae. These larvae, called glochidia, requires salmon or sea trout to host them for the first stage of their development.

They attach to the gills of trout in the River Tyne between late July and early August, where they remain until the following spring when they drop off the fish's gills. They need clean water and gravel, and well oxygenated water where they continue to grow.

The survival rate for juveniles has declined over the years, which has led to an ageing population, with few mussels under 50 years old.

This means they are a critically endangered species with only around 30,000 adult mussels in the wild in the North Tyne area, and 500,000 across the country.

This work at the hatchery is to try to increase the numbers of juveniles in the river, boost future numbers, natural reproduction and survival rates in efforts to halt the population decline.

## **Water quality improvements**

After considerable investment, water quality has improved dramatically across the UK and rivers in England are the healthiest they have been for 20 years.

The improvements in water quality of the River Tyne and its tributaries has been excellent, and along with the continued work of the Environment Agency and partners, has resulted in improved conditions for natural breeding in the rivers, and a flourishing ecology.

[Kielder Salmon Centre pearl mussel project](#)

Richard added:

In 2010 we first managed to successfully get freshwater pearl mussel larvae to attach to the gills of sea trout. Since then we have released sea trout every spring to the River Tyne tributaries.

Over the next two years we will be carrying out surveys, looking for the first of these juvenile mussels that were released to see if or where they have survived.

Even at 7 years old they will be less than 3cms long, most of which will be buried under the river bed. In another 7 to 10 years they should be old enough to breed.

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## School holidays and parent power

The Supreme Court upheld the law which states parents must send their children to school during term time unless they are ill or are being home educated to an agreed standard and programme.

Some think this is an unreasonable interference with parents who may have other ways to bring up their children. They believe children can learn outside school as well as in, and think that sometimes a child could benefit from travel during term time.

Others, including the Supreme Court, think children are best advised to follow the full courses offered by their schools. Missing a week or two in a busy term would mean the child has to catch up somehow on the lessons and exercises missed. Teachers do not welcome having to make special provision for children who missed the first explanation and the work on the new topics introduced when they were away. Of course they need to help children who have been off sick for a time period to catch up, but they usually do not want to increase the numbers and incidence of this remedial task. They point out that schools offer quite long holidays allowing families time off with their children.

The father who brought the case now says he has the money to send his child to a fee paying school, where he thinks he could get a better agreement with the Head teacher. He says he is bringing the case for all those who cannot afford this option. It is true that limiting families to travel in school holidays allows travel companies to charge more for these peak periods. In the case of the summer holiday in the UK the school time off also coincides with the better weather which would attract premium prices anyway.

Parliament intended the law to require parents to send their children to school in term time. The Court has upheld the will of Parliament. Do any of you think that wrong?

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## BCC: Shortage of digital skills hampering business productivity and growth

Today the BCC releases the results of our digital survey on skills.

7 April 2017

Digital skills are increasingly important to the operation of businesses in the UK but companies are facing a shortage of skills in their workforce which is hampering productivity, according to a new survey by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), released today (Friday).

The survey of more than 1,400 businesses across the UK found that 84% of firms say digital and IT skills are more important to their business than two years ago, with half (51%) saying these skills are significantly more important.

However, the survey also found that more than three-in-four businesses are facing a shortage of digital skills in their workforce, with 52% reporting a slight shortage, 21% a significant one and 3% a critical shortage.

**The key findings of the survey are:**

- The skills most important to companies are **basic computer skills** (72%), **communicating and connecting through digital channels** (71%) and **management of digital information** (69%)
- Skills shortages are having adverse effects on many firms including, **increasing workload on existing staff** (52%), **higher operating costs** (29%), and causing **difficulties in meeting customer requirements** (28%)
- Businesses regard **a lack of time for staff training** (41%), **difficulty in identifying appropriate training** (32%), and the **high cost of training** (25%), as the **leading barriers to rectifying these shortages**.

**Adam Marshall, Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:**

“The evidence is clear: better digital skills make firms more productive, and a lack of digital skills holds them back.

“Businesses themselves need to do a lot more to tackle the digital skills shortages they face, and their leaders need to be alive to the fact that a failure to tackle this issue will have an impact on their bottom line. Too many firms are stuck in an unproductive cycle, where the failure to take action has serious consequences.

“Training providers can give firms a helping hand, by engaging with companies on their digital needs and helping them to free up resources for growth. Government must help as well, by recognising that some of the high-level digital skills businesses need will come from overseas so a pragmatic immigration system needs to be in place to provide firms with access to the workers required to fill the gaps.”

**Ends**

**Notes to editors:**

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) surveyed 1,465 business people from all regions of the UK online in January 2017 to understand how businesses

rate the overall reliability of their broadband connections, and how a more reliable connection could help their businesses. Of the businesses surveyed, 96% were SMEs, 22% operate in the manufacturing sector, and 78% operate in the services sector.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: [www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

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