

Cabinet Secretary announces a new Avian Influenza Prevention Zone

Lesley Griffiths has also confirmed there will be some important changes to the measures that will apply within the new all-Wales Prevention Zone.

The current Prevention Zone requires all keepers of poultry and other captive birds to keep their birds indoors or take all appropriate steps to keep them separate from wild birds, and to enhance biosecurity. This follows a number of confirmed cases of Avian Flu across the UK, including in a backyard flock of chicken and ducks near Pontyberem, Carmarthenshire.

Expert advice suggests it is unlikely the current level of risk will change before the current Prevention Zone is scheduled to end on 28 February. In view of this, and following consultation with industry and veterinary representatives, the Cabinet Secretary has decided to put in place a new Prevention Zone, that will take effect from midnight on 28 February.

The new Avian Influenza Prevention Zone requires all keepers to complete a self assessment of biosecurity measures on their premises. The objective being to keep domestic flocks totally separate from wild birds by continuing to keep birds housed or using other measures, which may include permitting controlled access to outside areas, subject to the introduction of additional risk mitigation measures.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

“My decision to put in place a new Avian Influenza Prevention Zone until 30 April is based on sound expert and industry advice.

“The risk of infection from wild birds is unlikely to decrease in the coming weeks. The changes I am announcing today are proportionate and place the onus on the keeper to select the best option for their circumstances to protect their birds. They must, however, ensure compliance with the additional risk mitigation measures”.

The Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales, Christianne Glossop added:

“Keepers of poultry and other captive birds must remain vigilant for signs of disease. Avian Influenza is a notifiable disease, and any suspicion should be reported immediately to the Animal and Plant Health Agency. Keepers should practice the highest levels of biosecurity if they are to minimise the risk of infection.

“I continue to strongly encourage all poultry keepers, even those with fewer than 50 birds, to provide their details to the Poultry

Register. This will ensure they can be contacted immediately, via email or text update, in an avian disease outbreak enabling them to protect their flock at the earliest opportunity”.

Innovation and commitment to quality – making Bluestone a success

The final phase saw the addition of 64 new luxury holiday lodges, a development which was supported by funding from the Welsh Government and has created 115 jobs in the local area. The holiday village’s total number of 5* lodges, cottages and studio apartments is now more than 300 and the resort welcomes 140,000 staying guests per year plus a further 120,000 day visitors to Blue Lagoon Waterpark.

The development was supported by £1.5 million of Tourism Investment Support Scheme funding through Visit Wales, the ambitious expansion programme took 18 months to complete at a cost of £8.5 million.

Bluestone is now one of Wales top 10 biggest private sector employers, and employs 700 people.

The development comes against the backdrop of sustained growth for the 5* resort, which is set over 500 acres of national park near Narberth in Pembrokeshire. During a visit led by Chief Executive William McNamara, The Economy Secretary had a flavour of future plans which include the development of the nearby Black Pool Mill and a Skydome for the resort.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates, said:

“I’d like to congratulate the team at Bluestone for the excellent, high quality product which they’ve developed – and which is proving so popular with new and returning guests, this is clearly evident by their high occupancy rates. I’m delighted that the Welsh Government has been able to play a part in laying the foundations and supporting the growth of this business – which is such an important employer in rural Wales. I wish the team every success with their innovative ideas for future development of the resort.”

Bluestone Chief Executive, William McNamara, said:

“Pembrokeshire does tourism for a living and we’re incredibly proud of the way in which Bluestone has cemented itself as a unique jewel in the crown of the Welsh tourism offering.

“Clearly, with a thriving industry, there are huge opportunities for the sector and for us as a business. Our research shows that 50% of our guests have never previously visited Pembrokeshire so there’s a real opportunity here to demonstrate our unique offering to new audiences.

“I’m pleased to have the opportunity to showcase all that has been achieved at Bluestone to date and to share with the Cabinet Secretary our ambitious vision for the future.”

The 115 jobs at Bluestone are in addition to the 696 new and 787 safeguarded jobs that were announced by the Welsh Government last week following direct support.

[News story: £170 million plan to dual vital Somerset road](#)

The key route between Sparkford and Ilchester is being upgraded to relieve the over-congested road and create 30 miles of dual carriageway between Mere and South Petherton.

The £170 million plan is part of the [government’s £15 billion investment in our motorways and major A roads between 2015 and 2020](#) – the biggest in a generation.

More than 26,000 vehicles use this stretch of road a day, double the number it was designed for. Dualling the route will cut journey times and new junctions will enhance safety.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Almost 4 million trips are made on the A303 every year and we are investing more than £2 billion to improve these motorists’ journeys, making them quicker and safer.

Tackling congestion on this vital road will also help boost the economy in the south-west, unlock thousands of jobs and homes and promote tourism.

Work will include making junctions safer as well as providing better links for pedestrians and cyclists.

Highways England is consulting on the 2 routes and is urging residents to have their say on the plans. The consultation runs from 15 February to 29

March 2017.

The preferred route between Sparkford and Ilchester is due to be announced in autumn this year. Work is expected to start in 2020.

Highways England chief executive Jim O'Sullivan said:

This scheme will be really good news for people travelling to and from the south-west, particularly during the busy summer months.

Our consultation and public exhibitions will provide an excellent opportunity to explain further our plans and to hear feedback from people on our proposals to deliver the scheme.

A separate consultation on building a [tunnel for the A303 near Stonehenge](#) is also underway. This will further improve journeys on the main road between London and the south-west.

Further details on upgrading the A358 between Taunton and Southfields will also be revealed shortly.

Highways England is holding the following public information events:

- 12.00 noon to 8.30pm, Thursday 23 February: Sparkford Inn Function Room, Sparkford
- 10.00am to 5.00pm, Queen Camel Memorial Hall, High Street, Queen Camel, Yeovil
- 10.00am to 6.00pm, Friday, 10 March: Davis Hall, Howell Hill, West Camel, Yeovil

[News story: Avian flu confirmed at a farm near Redgrave in Suffolk](#)

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H5N8 avian flu has been confirmed at a poultry premises near Redgrave, in the district of mid-Suffolk.

The UK's Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer has confirmed H5N8 avian flu at a

poultry premises near Redgrave, in the district of mid-Suffolk.

This follows the announcement of an initial 10km Temporary Control Zone around the premises on 13 February after laboratory analysis identified the presence of H5N8. Further investigations into the nature of the virus have now confirmed that it is the same highly pathogenic strain of H5N8 that has been found in wild and farmed birds in the UK since December 2016.

A 3km Protection Zone and a 10km Surveillance Zone have been put in place around the infected premises to limit the risk of the disease spreading. We have published [full details of the controls in place](#). Use our [interactive map](#) to check if you are affected by restrictions around any premises.

The affected premises is estimated to contain approximately 23,000 birds. A number have died and the remaining live birds at the premises will be humanely culled. A full investigation is under way to determine the source of the infection.

Public Health England advise that the risk to public health from the virus is very low and the Food Standards Agency is clear that bird flu does not pose a food safety risk for UK consumers.

[Read the latest advice and information on avian flu in the UK](#), including actions to reduce the risk of the disease spreading, advice for anyone who keeps poultry or captive birds and details of previous cases. Journalists with queries should [contact Defra press office](#).

[There's a real lack of ambition and clarity in the government's digital transformation strategy – Trickett](#)

Jon Trickett MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for the Cabinet Office, responding to warnings from the Institute for Government about deficiencies in the Government Transformation Strategy, said:

“Ministers need to pay attention to these warnings. There's a real lack of ambition and clarity in the government's digital transformation strategy.

“While the Government tried to avoid criticism by sneaking it out after the Brexit debate, they cannot ignore the details which they'll be judged on in the long term.

“Theresa May and her Government should throw their weight behind this strategy to make sure a digital transformation actually takes place – and this isn’t just another flashy strategy that falls by the wayside when Ministers realise they haven’t thought through the details.”

Ends