

## **Press release: PM meeting with Guy Verhofstadt: 6 March**

This morning the Prime Minister met Guy Verhofstadt MEP at Downing Street, as part of ongoing engagement with representatives from the European Parliament.

The Prime Minister and Mr Verhofstadt discussed the importance of citizens' rights, including the proposals the UK put forward last week regarding EU citizens arriving during the implementation period. The Prime Minister reiterated that the expectations of those moving to the UK in this period will not be the same as those who arrived before our withdrawal.

The Prime Minister restated her commitment to avoiding a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland and noted the importance of officials from the Irish government, the European Commission and the UK meeting to discuss practical solutions.

They discussed the European Parliament's proposals for an institutional framework to support a close future relationship between the UK and the EU and the Prime Minister explained the vision for the future economic partnership set out in her Mansion House speech.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster David Lidington and the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU David Davis attended the meeting. Mr Verhofstadt also met the Home Secretary Amber Rudd after the meeting.

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## **Press release: Sandwell Valley Park remains open during construction works**

Access preparation for the construction of phase 2 of the Environment Agency's Perry Barr and Witton Flood Risk Management Scheme started late January and will continue for the next couple of months. The main construction for the scheme will begin late spring/early summer and will reduce the risk of flooding to 1,400 properties in the area.

Over the next few weeks park visitors will see tree felling operations and some movement of HGVs through the access routes by Forge Mill Farm and the railway bridge by the RSPB centre. Any HGV movement will be carried out within normal working hours Monday to Friday. Priority will be given to park users, to keep disruption to a minimum. Both Forge Mill Farm and the RSPB will remain open during construction, and a path between the 2 buildings will remain available throughout the construction of the scheme. Handsworth Golf Course will be modified to support the scheme, but it will remain open as

usual.

Recent Environment Agency drop-in sessions updated the public about progress of works, and received valuable feedback from local community members and representatives of user groups in the park. Another drop-in session is being planned in the near future. Staff will be on hand to answer questions and confirm information such as timescales, footpath closures and traffic management. Attendees will also be able to view the plans and get an overview of the programme as a whole.

Rachel Kelly, Environment Agency project lead for the scheme said:

This is a very exciting scheme that is going to reduce the risk of flooding for 1,400 properties in the area. We have been working closely with our partners and the local community to ensure that we minimise disruption to the park users and keep the community informed as we progress through the construction phase.

Councillor David Hosell, cabinet member for highways and the environment, said:

Council officers have worked hard with the Environment Agency to ensure that the scheme has minimal effect on visitors to the Valley.

We are delighted that part of the scheme and work in the Country Park will include new fencing for improved animal pens at Forge Mill Farm, extending it as a visitor attraction. There will also be improvements to the entrance into the park for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders entering from the Old Newton Road.

More information about the Perry Barr and Witton Flood Risk Management Scheme is available [online](#). Alternatively contact the Environment Agency project team at [witton.frms@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:witton.frms@environment-agency.gov.uk).

Along with flood defences and flood management schemes, knowing your flood risk is also important when protecting your family and property from flooding. People can check their risk and register to receive free flood warnings by visiting the Environment Agency's [flood information pages](#) or calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

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## [Transparency data: Exmouth Marina dredging and disposal at Sprey Point](#)

*Updated:* Extended suspension of the licence until 18 January 2019.

The MMO granted a marine licence in August 2017 for maintenance dredging of Exmouth Marina and disposal of materials at the Sprey Point disposal site. The Sprey Point disposal site lies off Teignmouth Beach.

Dredging began in late February 2018 and concerns were raised by users of the beach that black-silt like material was being washed ashore following the disposal of dredged material.

The MMO provided an [update on 15 February](#) in which it addressed a number of issues raised by local residents. This includes an explanation about choice of disposal sites. It also explains that testing of material was carried out prior to disposal as part of the application process. This was carried out in line with the OSPAR guidelines. This showed that the material is safe for disposal at sea in line with international conventions.

On 26 February 2018 [the MMO announced](#) it had suspended the marine licence for dredging at Exmouth Marina and subsequent disposal activities at Sprey Point while it investigated the source of the material seen on Teignmouth Beach.

On 6 March 2018 [the MMO clarified](#) that the suspension of the marine licence remains in place while it continues its investigations and provided further information, including that we have mobilised our scientific and technical advisors at the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) to carry out modelling relating to use of the Sprey Point disposal site with the aim of better understanding likely pathways for sediment transport from the disposal site to the beach.

A number of site visits have been undertaken at Teignmouth Beach. In late February, the Environment Agency attended the beach following reports of pollution and the MMO undertook further site visits on 27 February and 5

March. Neither organisation observed significant discoloration and it appears that minimal black material is on the beach following storm events. We have received no further evidence to indicate additional material has been washed up and any clean-up activities are not deemed necessary at this time.

## **Suspension of licence**

On 9 March 2018 the MMO extended the suspension of the marine licence to 14 June 2018. A copy of the suspension notice is published on this page. In addition, a condition of the original marine licence is that dredging does not take place between 1 June and 31 August in any year. This means activity cannot take place while the licence is suspended and/or during this period. The suspension was subsequently extended to 30 September 2018.

On 12 September 2018 the MMO extended the suspension of the licence to 18 January 2019. The MMO continues to work with the applicant on how to proceed after this time.

Information about the marine activities and licence documents are available online via the [MMO's public register](#) (case reference MLA/2016/00372).

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## **[Press release: Hertfordshire paedophile will spend longer in jail](#)**

A man who was part of a paedophile ring has had his sentence increased after the Solicitor General Robert Buckland QC MP, appealed it for being too low.

Robert Lindsay, 39, was originally sentenced in December at Luton Crown Court. He was sentenced to 5 years and 3 months in prison with a 3 year licence extension for offences including conspiracy to rape a child, conspiracy to commit sexual activity with a child, making indecent images of a child.

Today, the Court of Appeal increased his sentence to 7 years and 6 months, with a 3 year license extension.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General said:

This man exploited children for his own sexual gratification. His actions will have had a devastating and lasting effect on their victims. Lindsay's crimes are truly despicable and deserved tougher punishment. Crimes of this nature will not be tolerated, and I hope the increased sentence sends a strong message that perpetrators will be brought to justice.