

News story: Redundancy payments hotline restored

[unable to retrieve full-text content]The Redundancy Payment Service helpline is operating as normal once again.

Consultation outcome: Invasive non-native species regulations: enforcement

Updated: Summary of responses and government response added in English and Welsh.

We want to know what you think about our proposals to introduce penalties to enforce the EU regulation on invasive non-native species. These penalties will apply to offences in England and Wales.

The [EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation](#) applies restrictions on invasive non-native species of most concern in Europe, including a ban on keeping and selling.

Press release: Trade Bill second reading

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox today sets out how the government's Trade Bill will benefit businesses and consumers, as the UK progresses towards leaving the EU and shapes its own trade policy for the first time in 40 years.

Dr Fox will explain during the second reading in Parliament today (Tuesday 9 January), how the bill will provide continuity and stability for businesses and consumers by creating the powers necessary to replicate existing EU trade arrangements in UK law.

It will also establish a Trade Remedies Authority to take back powers from

the EU to protect UK industry from unfair and injurious trading practices, such as dumping.

This comes after the Treasury's Customs Bill received its second reading yesterday (Monday 8 January), which will allow the government to create a standalone customs regime and amend the VAT and excise regimes. Together the bills will deliver the necessary powers for the UK to be prepared from day one of leaving the EU.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

International trade creates jobs, helps lower prices for consumers and contributes to a growing economy – our Trade Bill will provide maximum certainty and continuity for business and consumers.

As an international economic department our priority is to ensure that we continue to benefit from the trade agreements that the EU already has with other countries, and that we maintain the flow of free trade in both directions at the point we leave. Stability now with the flexibility to seize new opportunities in the future is what we seek.

Measures in the bill will only be used to implement any changes needed as a result of transitioning existing trade arrangements that the UK is part of through our membership of the EU. These have already been scrutinised at an EU level and have been overseen in the UK by the EU Select Committees.

Countries with this type of trade agreement with the EU account for some 12% of UK trade. Ensuring that this trade continues will provide certainty and stability for workers, consumers, businesses, and our international trading partners.

The bill will also provide the legislative basis for UK businesses to continue to have guaranteed access to global public procurement markets worth £1.3 trillion every year, by enabling the UK to implement its obligations as an independent member of the multi-national Government Procurement Agreement (GPA). This will protect continuity of access for UK companies overseas and ensure that we can still tap into international expertise and obtain the best deal for UK taxpayers.

Once the UK leaves the EU, it will take up an independent seat at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva – allowing the UK government to shape global trading policy. DIT has already set up 14 Trade Working Groups across 21 countries to progress existing trade and investment relationships.

Further information

The Trade Bill does not provide for the implementation of trade agreements with countries that the EU does not have an existing trade agreement with and the powers in the bill cannot be used for the implementation of future free trade agreements with new countries.

The Trade Bill provides the necessary powers so that trade arrangements transitioned with third countries can be fully implemented within UK law, and remain operable over time after EU exit.

Since the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 came into force, the agreements the UK has ratified have already been through a domestic Parliamentary scrutiny process under that Act. The Government has made clear its intention to ratify all EU free trade agreements entered into during our EU membership.

Parliament can approve the terms of the UK membership of the GPA via the process under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010.

DIT has already sought views on the UK's approach to its future trade policy and published [responses](#) to the [White Paper](#) published last October and we continue to seek views as we develop our trade policy.

The government is preparing for when the UK operates its own independent trade remedies system to protect domestic industry injured by goods being unfairly traded, or by unforeseen surges in imports. It has introduced legislation in the [Trade Bill](#) to set up a new, independent, arms-length body, the Trade Remedies Authority, to carry out these investigations and make recommendations for duties to be imposed. The framework for the new system that the TRA will operate is set out in the [Taxation \(Cross-border Trade\) Bill](#).

[Press release: Parole Board information for Victims](#)

A victim can be kept informed of a prisoner's progress by signing up to the victim contact service. This is a service that the National Probation Service provide and a victim will be offered the option to sign up when the crime took place, although a victim can sign up at any time.

There is only limited information that can be disclosed but this includes if the prisoner is due a parole review. A victim would not necessarily be told which prison the prisoner is held in, unless they opt to ask to attend a parole hearing in person.

Once a victim is aware that a parole review is taking place, they can decide whether to submit a Victim Personal Statement (VPS). This statement will go into the evidence presented to the Parole Board and the victim will have the option to attend the oral hearing in person, if there is to be one, to read out their statement. Not all cases are heard at oral hearing and many are concluded on the papers where a VPS will be considered and seen by the Parole Board panel.

The victim personal statement is about the impact the crime had on the victim at the time and continues to have in the present day. A victim can ask for certain conditions to be set, should the offender be released, for example to include an exclusion zone of where the victim lives. A statement should not include anything that relates to risk, but if a victim does have information that relates to how risky a prisoner is, then that information should be passed on to the probation service and they will consider including it in their report.

The VPS does not directly link to the decision. This is because the Parole Board's focus is risk assessment which is not the focus of the VPS. If risk information is contained in the VPS it would have been dealt with as a separate matter. The VPS does allow the panel to direct questions to the prisoner regarding impact of their behaviour, insight into their behaviour, remorse, empathy and assessing licence conditions. It gives the panel insight into the original offence and the impact of those affected. It also helps the panel decide appropriate licence conditions, if the prisoner is to be released.

Writing a victim personal statement can be a traumatic experience and victims will be helped through this by a Victim Liaison Officer. The Parole Board has produced a booklet to assist victims in understanding how parole works, [which is available here](#).

For information on Indeterminate Sentence Prisoners, [use this link](#).

[Press release: Parole Board information on Indeterminate Sentence Prisoners \(ISPs\)](#)

Indeterminate sentences carry a minimum term, or tariff, for the purposes of punishment and to reflect the gravity of the offence. Once an indeterminate sentence prisoner's minimum term has been served, he/she is eligible to be considered for release by the Parole Board. The law states that the offender is no longer held in prison as a punishment and can only remain in prison if they pose a risk to the public. It requires a court, in this case the Parole Board, to decide that issue.

Whilst the Board is committed to ensuring that victims are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve, the Board is governed by statute. Parliament has, since 1997, determined that the sole task of the Board is to consider the risk posed by the prisoner at the time of his or her parole hearing. Deciding whether to release a prisoner is a matter of judgement, based on all the evidence presented to the panel.

The Parole Board makes these decisions by assessing the risk the prisoner presents to the public. It may only direct the release of a life sentence prisoner if it is satisfied that it is no longer necessary for him/her to be detained in order to protect the public from serious harm. If it is so satisfied, it is required to release the prisoner. The Parole Board is not legally permitted to consider whether the prisoner has been punished enough, instead it must focus solely on how dangerous the prisoner is.

When making its decision the Parole Board will take into account the nature of the index offence, the prisoner's offending history, the prisoner's progress in prison, any statement made on behalf of the victim(s), psychologist's reports, probation officer's reports, prisons officer's reports and any statistical risk assessments that have been completed. There must also be a comprehensive resettlement plan in place.

Any indeterminate sentence prisoner released will be managed in the community by the probation service under strict licence conditions. Should a prisoner breach one of these licence conditions they can be recalled to prison.

Any indeterminate sentence prisoner not released must, under current legislation, have their continued detention reviewed periodically, but at least every two years. The date of parole reviews is set by the Secretary of State for Justice.