

News story: Statement from the Justice Secretary on judgment re: John Worboys

I welcome today's judgment and congratulate the victims who brought this unprecedented legal action.

I want to take this opportunity reiterate my heartfelt sympathy for all they, and the other victims, have suffered as a result of Worboys' hideous crimes.

I took expert legal advice from Leading Counsel on whether I should bring a challenge. The bar for judicial review is set high. I considered whether the decision was legally rational – in other words, a decision which no reasonable Parole Board could have made.

The advice I received was that such an argument was highly unlikely to succeed. And, indeed, this argument did not succeed.

However, the victims succeeded in a different argument.

They challenged that, while Ministry of Justice officials opposed release, they should have done more to put forward all the relevant material on other offending.

They also highlighted very significant failures on the part of the Parole Board to make all the necessary inquiries and so fully take into account wider evidence about Worboys' offending.

I also received advice on the failure of process argument and was advised that this was not one that I as Secretary of State would have been able to successfully advance.

The victims were better placed to make this argument and this was the argument on which they have won their case.

Indeed, the judgment suggests that, had I brought a case, the standing of the victims may have been compromised.

Given the very serious issues identified in this case, I can announce today that I intend to conduct further work to examine the Parole Board rules in their entirety.

As a result of the work that has been completed to date, I have already decided to abolish Rule 25 and will do so as soon as possible after the Easter recess. This will enable us to provide for the Parole Board to make available summaries of the decisions they make to victims.

In addition, I will bring forward proposals for Parole Board decisions to be challenged. I intend to consult on the detail of these proposals by the end of April alongside other proposals to improve the way that victims are kept informed about the parole process.

I will make a statement to Parliament this afternoon and set out our response to the judgment – and our next steps – in more detail.