

News story: Rail Minister launches review of tree cutting alongside rail lines

- tree felling to be suspended during current nesting season
- study will focus on safety, performance and minimising harm to wildlife
- Tree Council and RSPB are part of consultation

A review of Network Rail's tree cutting and vegetation management has been announced by Rail Minister Jo Johnson.

The Rail Minister has asked Network Rail to suspend all felling during the current bird nesting season, except where safety critical.

The review will consider how Network Rail can best ensure the safety of our railways, while also protecting wildlife and preserving trees.

It will also build on areas of existing best practice in vegetation management within the organisation.

Network Rail is the fourth largest landowner in the UK and in the past 4 years has made significant progress in improving the management of trees alongside train tracks. But last year alone there were an estimated 1,500 incidents involving trees and bad weather which caused widespread travel disruption to rail passengers.

Jo Johnson, Rail Minister, said:

How we manage our trees and vegetation – and protect the wildlife that lives in and around them – is an important issue.

It is right that Network Rail are able to remove trees that could be dangerous, or impact on the reliability of services. In the last year, vegetation management and related incidents have cost the railway £100 million.

But I also understand that cutting back trees can alarm people who enjoy these environments – and can especially raise concerns over the effect on birds during nesting season.

That is why I am commissioning this review. In the meantime I have asked Network Rail to suspend all felling during the current nesting season, except where it is safety critical.

The review will look at whether Network Rail has the capacity and capability to manage vegetation in a way that minimises harm to wildlife. It will also look at whether staff need more training – for instance in identifying

approaches to managing them that would be better than felling.

In launching it, the Department for Transport has consulted with the Tree Council and the RSPB. The review will report its findings to the minister in the summer.

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[News story: Announcing the new UK Criminal Records Trade Body \(CRTB\)](#)

The group, called the Criminal Records Trade Body (CRTB) will form a committee within the National Association of Professional Background Screeners (NAPBS).

The CRTB is open to all organisations registered with the DBS, Disclosure Scotland and Access NI. They will work together to promote a culture of safeguarding and referral.

The group will provide an authoritative and independent voice, representing a wide range of sectors using criminal record check information, during an unprecedented period of change and digitisation of services. Aims and objectives of the group include:

- supporting the UK's safeguarding agenda
- encouraging the adoption of enhanced identity verification processes
- supporting candidates and users in understanding eligibility of checks, and highlighting the work of [SAFERjobs](#) in preventing employment screening scams
- contributing and commenting on the development of policy and legislation
- promoting best practice and awareness of overseas criminal record checks

Founding members explained:

The group will play a vital role in supporting the UK's criminal

record agencies to engage with a network of organisations who access criminal record check information.

The group hopes to attract organisations, and individuals, passionate about criminal record checking across a wide range of sectors and engage in dialogue to improve existing processes that will support the safeguarding agenda.

Sue Smith, DBS Director of Safeguarding said, “we welcome the formulation of the CRTB and look forward to engaging with its members as we continue to improve the services offered by the DBS to help protect vulnerable groups in our society.”

The CRTB is founded by: Atlantic Data, Credence, Experian, GB Group, Reed and Security Watchdog.

If you are interested in joining the CRTB, then please register your interest with the NAPBS by emailing CRTB@napbs.org.uk.

[Press release: Penny Mordaunt praises Scottish aid workers](#)

The International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt today (Thursday 8 May 2018) praised the heroic efforts of Scottish aid workers delivering life-saving assistance to people that have fled violence in Burma and are now sheltering in neighbouring Bangladesh.

Visiting the British Red Cross offices in Glasgow today, she spoke to Scottish aid worker Kenny Hamilton, from Glasgow and currently stationed in Cox’s Bazar in Bangladesh.

Mr Hamilton leads a sanitation project building safe toilets and overseeing the treatment and safe disposal of human waste to help prevent the spread of deadly diseases.

The risk of a cholera outbreak in Cox’s Bazar is extremely high and will increase further with the looming monsoon season, which is expected to flood camps and could contaminate around half of the clean water sources.

Earlier this week, Ms Mordaunt [announced fresh UK aid support for people living in Cox’s Bazar](#) to provide medication, sturdier shelters, food, clean water and support for women to give birth safely.

Speaking at the British Red Cross offices in Glasgow, the International

Development Secretary said:

With the devastating cyclone and monsoon season looming over the crowded camps in Cox's Bazar, hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people are in danger of landslides or of falling ill with potentially fatal diseases.

The UK is leading the way to provide vaccinations, strengthen shelters and deliver food and clean water to those that have been forced to flee their homes because of brutal violence and persecution.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent continue to play a vital role in the response to this crisis and Scottish aid workers are among those remarkable humanitarians delivering life-saving assistance to the men, women and children who have suffered so much.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent have already provided emergency support to 254,000 people – backed by UK aid – including fresh water, jerry cans and hygiene kits.

A 24 hour surgical field hospital with 100 beds, including 40 isolation beds, is operating opposite one of the largest makeshift camps, staffed by Bangladeshi doctors and midwives with international medical and support staff.

British Red Cross aid worker Kenny Hamilton said:

Our priority is water hygiene, health promotion and making existing sanitation facilities more robust for the upcoming monsoon season. UK aid support will help our response effort to limit the impact of the rains both in terms of potential damage to infrastructure from landslides and promoting hygiene.

To do this we are decommissioning unsafe latrines and building new, safe, sustainable ones that will be cleaned on a regular basis. We are not only making these latrines safer to protect against disease, but also for women and vulnerable people by building them in appropriate areas and making sure they are properly lit and dignified.

As the monsoon season sets in, it is more imperative than ever that cleaning happens regularly so that people can go to the toilet

safely and to protect against the spread of disease.

From the onset of the crisis the UK has been a leading donor, and this week's announcement of an additional £70 million of humanitarian support will help ensure hundreds of thousands of persecuted people who have fled neighbouring Burma will be better protected during this dangerous time.

UK aid supported work to prepare the Cox's Bazar camps for the monsoon season began in January, when the UN estimated 102,000 men, women and children were living in areas at risk of flooding and 12,000 people were at risk from landslides.

Notes to editors

1. The UK Government has contributed £129 million to the crisis since 25 August 2017. As part of this, £70 million announced on Monday 7 May is a new package of support, not previously allocated to this humanitarian programme.
2. UK support totalling £4 million is enabling the Red Cross Red Crescent to provide up to 200,000 vulnerable people with food, healthcare, water and sanitation in response to the crisis in Bangladesh.
3. This crisis resonates with the British public who have shown remarkable generosity raising £25.9 million for the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) Appeal. This includes £5 million which has been matched pound for pound by the UK Government.
4. There are approximately 941,000 people living in Cox's Bazar camps. Of these 681,000 are new arrivals since August 2017.
5. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Red Cross Movement is the world's largest humanitarian network. The Movement is made up of 190 individual National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, working through 17 million volunteers who are dedicated to the Fundamental Principles of Humanity, Neutrality, Impartiality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality.

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News story: Boost in support for children with additional needs

New measures to boost support for children and young people with additional needs have been announced today (10 May), setting out the next steps in the government's drive to give every child the tools to fulfil their potential.

[Data](#) published today shows more than 98% of Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) were reviewed by the 31 March 2018 deadline, as part of the introduction of new Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans.

These new plans provide tailored support for children and young people with additional needs, bringing together their education, health and social care needs for the first time.

The Department for Education has also confirmed three new contracts to boost support for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families, to build on the progress being made to tackle inequalities in the education system that will ensure Britain is a country that works for everyone.

Minister for Children and Families, Nadhim Zahawi said:

We want every child to have the support they need to unlock their potential, no matter what challenges they face. Today's data shows that almost all of SEN statements were reviewed on time, which is testament to the hard work of councils their partners and families all over the country to give children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) the support they deserve.

The new contracts we are announcing today, worth more than £25 million, will build on the progress we have seen over the last four years to make sure children, young people and their families have access to excellent support to help guide them through the new system.

We are also putting in place new measures to improve the SEND training available to school staff, including tools to develop the role of early years SEND coordinators – building on a commitment set out in our Early Years Workforce Strategy.

The new measures include:

- A contract worth £20million with the Council for Disabled Children, in partnership with Contact, to provide families and young people with SEND with impartial advice, support and information about the services and support on offer.
- A £3.8million [contract](#) with Contact, in partnership with KIDS and the

Council for Disabled Children, to promote and develop strategic participation by young people and parent carers.

- A SEND school workforce [contract](#) with nasen and University College London (UCL), on behalf of the Whole School SEND consortium, worth £3.4million over two years – to bring together schools, voluntary organisations and experts so that schools can deliver high-quality SEND.

Alongside these new contracts, the Department has developed new tools in partnership with nasen and Action for Children to create a [job description](#) and [specification](#) for Level 3 Early Years Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs).

This delivers on a commitment set out in the government's [Early Years Workforce Strategy](#) and will boost the profile of this important early years role to make sure children with additional learning needs get the right support from the earliest opportunity.

[News story: Call for evidence on assessment of qualifications in centres](#)

We have today (10 May 2018) launched a call for evidence on the assessment of qualifications in centres (schools, colleges, training providers, etc.).

We have recently been reviewing the quality of centre-based assessment judgements in vocational and technical qualifications. We need to be sure that assessment is fair and consistent whenever and wherever it is delivered, so that both standards and public confidence in regulated qualifications are maintained.

The evidence we have suggests that not all organisations' controls are as robust as they need to be. We are also aware that there are practical problems for awarding organisations in remaining compliant with our rules when assessment is delegated to centres.

We are therefore inviting awarding organisations, centres and other interested parties to inform our ongoing work to build a detailed picture of practice across the sector. We will use these responses to decide whether our rules are right on this point and, if not, how they might be changed. If we decide to change them, we will consult formally.

[Respond to our call for evidence](#)