

30-year anniversary of landmark release of red kites in the Chiltern Hills

Conservationists are celebrating a landmark moment in English wildlife conservation this month, as July sees the 30th anniversary of the re-introduction of red kites to the Chiltern Hills.

In July 1990 in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 13 young red kites – recently flown over from the Navarra region in Spain – took to the skies in their maiden flight in England, as part of an ambitious reintroduction programme.

The red kite is one Britain's most distinctive birds of prey with an unmistakable reddish-brown body, angled wings and deeply forked tail, and known for instantly recognisable mewing call.

Red kites used to breed across much of the UK, but persecution over a 200-year period saw numbers fall as they increasingly became a target for egg collectors, reducing them to a few breeding pairs in central Wales. By the 1980s, the red kite was one of only three globally threatened species in the UK.

The re-introduction 30 years ago was hugely successful and helped established a thriving population of the birds in the Chilterns area, selected due to its suitability in meeting the criteria set out by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature).

The move led to further introductions and the eventual re-establishment of red kites across the UK. By 1996, at least 37 pairs had bred in southern England and today red kites can be seen regularly in most English counties [with an estimated 1,800 pairs breeding across the UK](#).

Natural England chair Tony Juniper said:

Red kites are one of our most majestic birds of prey with a beautiful plumage, and are easily recognisable thanks to their soaring flight and mewing call. Persecuted to near-extinction, they have made a triumphant comeback in England over the past three decades.

Thanks to this pioneering reintroduction programme in the Chilterns, increased legal protection and collaboration amongst partners, the red kite stands out as a true conservation success story. The flagship red kite reintroduction project paved the way for further species re-introductions, helping to reverse the historic deterioration of our natural environment and our precious species that inhabit it.

The Nature Conservancy Council (now Natural England) collaborated with the RSPB, Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), Zoological Society London and British Airways to release the birds 30 years ago in an area on the Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire border.

Jeff Knott, RSPB operations director for Central and Eastern England said:

The red kite introduction project has been a fantastic example of conservation in action and is the result of really effective partnership working, which we're proud to be part of.

It's been amazing to see a species once persecuted to near extinction in this country, brought back and welcomed by local communities, with local economies reaping the dividends of the return of this iconic species.

In the 1980s, anyone wanting to see a red kite had to make a special pilgrimage to a handful of sites. Today it is a daily sight for millions of people. In a few short decades we have taken a species from the brink of extinction, to the UK being home to almost 10% of the entire world population. It might be the biggest species success story in UK conservation history!

Danny Heptinstall, Senior International Biodiversity Adviser at the JNCC, said:

Thirty years ago the reintroduction of a lost species was a radical act. Thanks to pioneering projects like the Chiltern Red Kites, it is now a standard tool in the nature conservation toolkit.

In 1990, the UK had only a few dozen red kites, 30 years later there are over 10,000. JNCC is delighted to have played its part in this ground-breaking conservation success story, and look forward to the continuing success of the project and others like it.

Red kites first breed at two years old and produce a single clutch of around three eggs, returning to the same nests each season. They feed mainly on carrion and worms, but are opportunistic and will occasionally take small mammals.

Red kites are now a common sight in the Chiltern Hills but can be seen across South East England, Yorkshire and the East Midlands, and in Wales and Scotland.

The government is committed through its [25 Year Environment Plan](#) to reintroducing formerly native species where there are clear environmental benefits.

The re-introduction of red kites was a trail-blazing project, and paved the way for successful reintroductions of bird species licensed by Natural England, [including white-tailed eagles to help establish a breeding population in southern England](#). Natural England is also involved in a number of initiatives to help ensure hen harriers recover through the [Hen Harrier Recovery Plan](#) including a southern re-introduction.

[New plans to ensure pubs, restaurants and cafes offer both smoking and non-smoking outdoor options](#)

Press release

People using pubs, restaurants and cafes will soon have greater freedom to choose non-smoking outdoor areas following an amendment tabled today to legislation in Parliament.



- Pubs, cafes and restaurants to offer choices for smokers and non-smokers as part of new bill
- Plans will help premises reassure all customers that they are open for businesses

People using pubs, restaurants and cafes will soon have greater freedom to choose non-smoking outdoor areas following an amendment tabled today to legislation in Parliament.

Under the Business and Planning Bill, the Government had already set out a range of measures to help these vital businesses safely reopen and get staff back to work by making it quicker, easier and cheaper to operate outside.

The Government will not ban outdoor smoking. Since the existing ban was introduced, businesses have invested heavily in their outdoor areas and banning outdoor smoking would lead to significant closures and job losses. However, today's amendment will ensure that customers are given more choice by ensuring premises offer separate seating for smokers and non-smokers outside.

Laws already exist making it illegal to smoke in enclosed areas and business owners can already make their own non-smoking policies in places where food is served.

This Government has taken great strides in reducing the harms caused by smoking and has committed to do so in the Prevention Green Paper.

Planning Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said:

We are supporting our pubs, cafes and restaurants to safely reopen and securing jobs by making it quicker, easier and cheaper to set up outdoor seating and stalls to serve food and drink, whilst protecting public health against the transmission of covid.

These changes will allow everyone to enjoy outdoor eating and drinking whether they smoke or not, with appropriate provisions made for non-smokers and smokers.

The changes in the amendment will help strike the right balance between protecting public health and not imposing additional red tape on businesses at a time when they need as much support as possible. The Government will not ban outdoor smoking in pubs, cafes or restaurants.

Businesses can already make their own non-smoking policies for outside space without the need for regulations. This guidance will reinforce this point, making it clear that the licence-holder has to make reasonable provision for smoke-free seating.

It includes:

1. Clear 'no smoking' signage displayed in designated areas.
2. No ash trays or similar receptacles to be provided or permitted to be left on furniture where a smoke-free seating is identified.
3. Licence holders should aim for a minimum 2 metre distance between non-smoking and smoking areas, wherever possible.

Today's announcement also builds on measures to help businesses get back on their feet, including:

1. Simpler licensing process for outdoor seating for pubs, restaurants and cafes
2. Councils encouraged to reduce red-tape and create more outdoor markets
3. Part of comprehensive plan to revive high streets, support the hospitality industry and help get people back to work

4. Helping councils and businesses transition from crisis response and lockdown, towards economic recovery

Published 19 July 2020

[UK defence teams up with world leading UK space company to secure next generation of military communications](#)

Built by Airbus Defence and Space, SKYNET 6A will soar among the stars, guaranteeing our Armed Forces fast, secure and reliable communications from thousands of miles above, wherever they are deployed.

SKYNET 6A will use some of the most advanced technology available, including a higher radio frequency spectrum and the latest in digital processing to provide more capacity, speed and greater versatility than its predecessor system the SKYNET 5 constellation.

The £500 million boost is the latest investment in the technological safeguards that help our Armed Forces deter threats from anywhere in the world, including Russia and China. This will secure UK leadership in defensive space and cyber operations for generations to come.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

To safeguard our military on operations around the world we need to ensure that we protect their communications on land, sea or in air. The newest contested frontier is space and so we need to provide resilience and better communications for our forces. SKYNET 6A is one of many solutions we shall be investing in over the next decade. This Government recognises the urgent need to defend and promote space capabilities.

This new satellite will continue to be controlled from the UK's existing ground stations, allowing for greater flexibility and security.

Effective and secure satellite communications are essential to support troops on the ground, and with the development of SKYNET 6A our personnel can continue to rely on space for secure communications until 2040 and beyond.

Built and assembled in the UK, the SKYNET 6A contract will sustain 550 highly skilled jobs, making good on the Government's commitment to drive employment across the UK. Airbus Defence & Space is the UK arm of the Airbus firm.

Completing the work in the UK will ensure SKYNET 6A remains a sovereign capability with the very best technology the private sector has to offer.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

Space technology plays an important role in supporting our military and keeping us safe, while also boosting the UK's economy and enabling world-leading science and research.

With this major investment in Skynet 6A, the development of the National Satellite Test Facility and the launch of a dedicated innovation programme, we are setting a bold new ambition for the UK in space.

The contract covers all aspects of the satellite's development. From the design, manufacture, and assembly stages, to integration, testing and finally the launch, SKYNET 6A will revolutionise the way defence is able to communicate.

SKYNET 6A is a modern design that exploits the latest technologies available from Airbus Defence and Space. The satellite will use the new Airbus Eurostar Neo telecommunications satellite platform coupled with electric orbit raising propulsion and station keeping systems.

10 'Nightingale Courts' unveiled

- Temporary courts to begin hearing cases from next week
- Move will ease pressure on courts system and tackle the number of outstanding cases
- Part of Government plan to ensure justice continues to be served throughout pandemic

Middlesbrough Town Hall, the Knights' Chamber within the grounds of Peterborough Cathedral, and the Ministry of Justice's headquarters in London are among the venues that will soon be in use.

The 10 sites will host the so-called Nightingale Courts with ongoing work to identify more potential locations. This will start to alleviate the pressure on courts and tribunals resulting from the pandemic – ensuring that the wheels of justice keep turning.

Spanning England and Wales, they will hear civil, family and tribunals work as well as non-custodial crime cases. The move will free up room in existing

courts to hear other cases, including custodial jury trials, which require cells and secure dock facilities to keep the public, victims and witnesses safe.

A court set up in East Pallant House, Chichester, is expected to begin hearing an expanded list of cases next week, with all 10 locations up and running in August.

The move forms part of government plans to ensure courts recover from the coronavirus pandemic as soon as possible and to avoid any delays getting criminals behind bars.

The confirmed sites are:

- Former county court at Telford, Shropshire
- Hertfordshire Development Centre, Stevenage
- Swansea Council Chambers, Swansea
- Cloth Hall Court, Leeds
- Middlesbrough Town Hall, Teesside
- East Pallant House, Chichester
- 102 Petty France, London
- Prospero House, London
- Former magistrates' court at Fleetwood, Lancashire
- Knights' Chamber and Visitor Centre, Bishop's Palace, Peterborough Cathedral

[Open Nightingale courts](#)

The Lord Chancellor, Robert Buckland QC MP said:

Our action to keep the justice system running throughout the pandemic has been globally recognised, with these Nightingale Courts being the latest step in this effort.

They will help boost capacity across our courts and tribunals – reducing delays and delivering speedier justice for victims.

But we won't stop there. Together with the judiciary, courts staff and legal sector, I am determined that we must pursue every available option to ensure our courts recover as quickly as possible.

In March 2020, almost half of all courts were closed and jury trials were paused to minimise social interaction between court users. Since then, court staff, legal professionals, and the judiciary have collaborated to prioritise cases and keep the justice system running throughout the lockdown – with up to 90% of all hearings using remote technology during the pandemic.

These actions have meant that, throughout the lockdown, domestic abuse victims could obtain protection orders, children could be safeguarded, and dangerous suspects dealt with.

Measures were put in place to safely resume jury trials in May 2020, and 54 Crown Courts will be hearing jury trials as of next week. More widely, almost all courts are now open to the public again – with over 300 operating this week.

Last week, the Lord Chancellor set out further measures which are being considered to help ease pressure on the courts system. These included opening courts for longer to increase the number of cases that can be heard safely on any given day, and continuing to use video technology to hear cases where appropriate. Additional potential Nightingale Courts sites are also being explored.

A major £142 million investment across the courts system has been announced to speed up technological improvements and modernise courtrooms.

Notes to Editors

1. A [major £142million investment has been announced to improve more than 100 courts](#)
2. New video technology is additionally being rolled, out having been used in up to 90% of hearings since the outbreak began.
3. See the [Lord Chancellor's statement on court recovery](#)
4. New video technology is additionally being rolled, out having been used in up to 90% of hearings since the outbreak began.
5. The courts will be carrying out the following work:
 - Former court building at Telford (Annex for the Telford Justice Centre), Shropshire – Civil and/or Family jurisdictions.
 - Former court building at Fleetwood (Annex for Preston or Blackpool Magistrates' Court), Lancashire – Civil and/or Family jurisdictions.
 - Hertfordshire Development Centre, Stevenage, Hertfordshire – Civil.
 - Swansea Council Chambers, Swansea – Non-custodial crime (i.e. defendant is on bail).
 - Cloth Hall Court, Leeds, Yorkshire – Civil trial work and Business and Property Court.
 - Middlesbrough Town Hall, Teesside – Initially Civil hearings. Later to be used for hybrid Civil hearings and Family.
 - East Pallant House, Chichester, Sussex – Civil and Family work.
 - 102 Petty France, Central London – Family jurisdiction.
 - Prospero House, Central London – Non-custodial crime (i.e. defendant is on bail).
 - The Knights' Chamber and Visitor Centre, Gatehouse, Bishops Palace, Peterborough – non-custodial corporate crime.

[amendments: circular 02/2020](#)

Help us improve GOV.UK

To help us improve GOV.UK, we'd like to know more about your visit today. We'll send you a link to a feedback form. It will take only 2 minutes to fill in. Don't worry we won't send you spam or share your email address with anyone.

Email address

Send me the survey