

More than 10,000 fish released into the Great Ouse

A total of 10,000 fry (fish that are just a few weeks old) and 100 one-year-old barbel were released into the river at Felmersham and Harrold Country Park and the river Ivel at Biggleswade.

The fish were collected from the Environment Agency Fish Farm at Calverton in Nottingham and carefully transported using specialist equipment.

The restocking took place on Monday, July 6th and was completed within a few hours while observing social distancing rules.

A total of 10,100 fish were released into the Great Ouse.

Kye Jerrom, Environment Agency fisheries specialist in East Anglia, said: "We've been carrying out habitat improvements and research into barbel on the Great Ouse for 14 years now. This project is a very important part of the outcome of that work.

"We restocked in these locations as we know the conditions for young fish are ideal.

"Most of our efforts to conserve barbel are to ensure that the habitat of the Ouse and its smaller tributaries like the Ivel, allow the species to become self-supporting."

Research has shown that the reduction in barbel on the Ouse was due to poor fry survival rate and reduced spawning success and opportunities.

Studies reveal that the survival of young barbel was being affected by the lack of clean spawning beds due to sediment build up and predation on barbel eggs, both caused by invasive signal crayfish.

The Environment Agency and partners have been working with angling clubs, landowners and the Wildlife Trust to make a number of improvements to tackle these issues.

These include the construction of several refuge zones for fry and juvenile fish, which provide cover from predators and offer protection during extreme weather.

The fish restocking was done while observing social distancing rules.

Kye added: "One of the three stocking locations is Harrold Country Park, where we installed structures to halt bank erosion, and provide refuge for small fish during flood events.

“In other parts of the catchment we’ve added flow deflectors, and narrowed the river channel, which helps ease sediment build up on important spawning gravels.

“Our ultimate aim is to restore the river and the barbel fishery to a level where it supports itself.

“We feel that we are getting close to that scenario, which is great news, and it confirms the investments we are making are working.”

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Chief Executive’s blog – Parole Board Covid-19 recovery plan

In March 2020 it was clear that the spread of Covid-19 made face to face hearings impossible and the Board was forced to progress cases in other ways.

Whilst there have been some inevitable challenges, since then, the Board has demonstrated some flexibility and imagination to progress cases fairly and safely by progressing hearings remotely. The numbers are positive.

Since Covid hit:

- 7,603 Parole Board decisions have been made
- There have been 1,029 directions for release
- 1,594 hearings have taken place via video or telephone.
- Far from a backlog building; the number of cases waiting for a hearing date has reduced by 46%.

Whilst this is positive, it is clear that we are some way away from normality. The Board has therefore published its COVID 19 recovery Strategy.

The Board has set four objectives to guide its recovery and ensure we can achieve the following aims.

We will:

1. Keep people safe and well
2. Manage our resources effectively
3. Maintain flexibility
4. Keep things simple and consistent

Under our strategy we will:

- Continue to pay close regard to Government advice.

- Continue to work remotely until it is safe to make changes.
- Ensure vulnerable members or staff will not undertake face-to-face oral hearings or return to the office until it is safe for them to do so.
- Allow our people to continue to work remotely for extended periods, limiting the need for public transport.
- Continue to schedule remote hearings until prisons are open for a sustained period (either regionally or nationally).
- Communicate and consult as our plans flex and change.

The Board sees 3 phases to our recovery plan (we are currently emerging from Phase 1):

Phase 1 – Access: May – June 2020

- Presume remote working
- Only essential access to PB site
- No access to prisons
- Limit use of public transport

Phase 2 – Mixed Economy: July – November 2020

- Consider re-starting small number of face-to-face hearings for those cases where it is essential for fairness and safe socially distanced hearings can be undertaken
- Scale up video hearings and increase number of remote rooms
- Teams start to return to 10SC in small numbers
- Some member recruitment starts
- Some access to prisons may be possible
- Some face-to-face events if can be managed safely with social distancing

Phase 3 – New Normal: December 2020 onwards

- Greater use of remote hearings and remote working where appropriate
- Increase in levels of face-to-face hearings if safe
- Different pathways for different types of cases
- Enough remote video rooms to meet demand
- Office reopened and more staff able to work from the PB office safely again, or with social distancing in place

We will only return to routine face-to-face oral hearings when it is safe to do so and will continue listing hearings but be ready to convert them to remote on a rolling basis to manage any potential extensions to, or rolling or local lockdowns.

Alongside this, The Board will ensure that its ongoing paper assessment process (the Member Case Assessment “MCA” process) matches the interim policy for remote hearings and include an extra step at MCA to support decision making on the papers.

Whilst face-to-face hearings must happen for some prisoners, we have found that for the majority remote hearings are fair and effective and allow us to operate in a period of ongoing uncertainty where further lockdowns are predicted for years to come.

For those cases that do require a face-to-face hearing, we will agree a way with HMPPS for how face-to-face hearings can take place safely in prisons with social distancing measures remaining in place. Where face-to-face hearings remain the most appropriate way forward, resuming them will depend upon prison access and a full risk assessment.

Video hearings are being scaled up and will be used in the majority of cases where it is important for panels to see each other and those attending. Telephone hearings will continue to be used when the facts of the case allow, making for speedier reviews, with much shorter time frames than an oral hearing. Telephone hearings will be used for determinate recall cases and to ensure adjourned cases progress appropriately.

The Parole Board now has eight virtual video meeting rooms which are allowing us to hold hundreds of video hearings each month. This number is set to double in the next few weeks and we plan to increase this in the coming weeks to up to 25 advanced video rooms that will allow side conversations and recording in the future.

Despite the significant challenges, prisoners, Prisoners' legal representatives and other participants (including victims) have been supportive and shown considerable patience and forbearance amidst the disruption caused by COVID 19. We are very grateful for their support and will continue to work with them to ensure cases are concluded fairly and safely in the future.

[New sanctions regime among push to boost protection for persecuted religious groups](#)

The review, published in July 2019, made 22 recommendations to improve the lives of persecuted members of all faiths, beliefs, and those of no belief. Implementation has already begun on half the recommendations, while work is ongoing to deliver the rest

Rehman Chishti MP, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, leads on the implementation of the Truro review and championing freedom of religion or belief for the Government internationally.

One of the main recommendations of the Truro review was in relation to sanctions, with the report suggesting the Government needed to be prepared to impose sanctions against perpetrators of freedom of religion or belief abuses.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab announced on Monday that the first wave of

designations under the UK's new, ground-breaking Global Human Rights sanctions regime will sanction those involved in religious persecution, including two Myanmar generals, Min Aung Hlaing and Soe Win.

The pair were designated for their involvement in the systematic killing, rape, sexual violence and enforced labour against the Rohingya people in Myanmar.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Everyone, no matter their faith or belief, deserves to be able to live a free and safe life, wherever they are in the world.

Our new global human rights regime will allow the UK to protect people of all religions, faiths and no belief against serious human rights violations and abuses, and ensure the perpetrators are sent a clear message that the UK will not tolerate their atrocious actions.

Rehman Chishti MP, who was appointed the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief in September 2019 as a result of the recommendations, this week reinforced the Foreign Office's commitment to implementing all of the recommendations of the Truro review.

Mr Chishti said:

This Government aspires to be the global champion for freedom of religion or belief for all. I want every citizen around the world to enjoy this basic right. The freedom to practice faith or belief without discrimination is one of the foundations of a free society.

During my time in office, I have taken forward 11 of the 22 Truro review recommendations, including overseeing the UK joining the International Religious Freedom Alliance, which allows like-minded member states to work together to promote freedom of religion or belief internationally, reinforcing the UK's commitment to be a global leader in championing freedom of religion or belief.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for Human Rights at the FC0 and DFID, added:

There is a critical intersection of religious rights with broader security issues like gender-based violence, including trafficking and forced marriage.

We know that free societies are more stable, more prosperous and more resilient against violent extremism, and our work on freedom of religion or belief, alongside our ongoing human rights work, is

key to improving the livelihoods of millions across the world.

Last year, the Bishop of Truro, Rt. Rev. Philip Mounstephen published his final report of his independent review of the Foreign Office's support to persecuted Christians around the world, incorporating 22 recommendations for the FCO's consideration.

In line with the Foreign Office's longstanding policy on Freedom of Religion or Belief, the vast majority of recommendations supported members of all faiths, beliefs, and no belief, not just Christians.

Since the review, the Foreign Office has continued to work with international partners, including through the International Religious Freedom Alliance, to reduce religious persecution worldwide.

As well as the implementation of freedom of religion or belief-related sanctions, the Foreign Office last year launched the John Bunyan Fund for Freedom of Religion or Belief. The £200,000 fund was made available to those with an interest in exploring the best ways that the UK Government can tackle the problem of persecution as it affects particular countries or groups.

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Convenors of SORP engagement discussions announced

Press release

SORP engagement process begins as convenors are appointed to take forward discussions on the next SORP.



The Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) sets out the framework for how larger charities prepare their annual report and accounts.

Following a governance review of the SORP development process in 2018-19, a new approach has been initiated which has greater engagement at its heart. To support the SORP-making body and the advisory SORP Committee in this work, volunteer engagement partners have been recruited through an open recruitment process. These partners each have a particular interest in one or more specific areas (known as engagement strands) which cover the key users of charity annual reports and accounts and the SORP itself.

To support the engagement work, each engagement strand has a convenor. These convenors have been drawn from SORP engagement partners following expressions of interest in the role. Details of each of the convenors and the strands they have been appointed to are provided on the [dedicated SORP website](#).

The Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) Board Chair Lindsay Montgomery CBE said:

Charity annual reports and accounts are a key mechanism for charities to be accountable and transparent. As regulator, we want to make sure that they are as useful, helpful and understandable as possible. Consequently OSCR takes its role as part of the SORP-making body very seriously. We would like to thank everyone who has volunteered as an engagement partner. To those who will act as convenors, you have a great opportunity to create a thoughtful debate around the development of a critical contributor to public trust in charities.

Sarah Finnegan, Head of Compliance and Enquiries at the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland said:

We are delighted to see the interest and enthusiasm from so many of our engagement partners in taking on the role of convenor and now look forward to working with our new convenors throughout the process of developing the SORP.

Nigel Davies, Assistant Director of Accountancy Services at the Charity Commission for England and Wales said:

It is heartening to see charities embracing leadership and responsibility for the wider sector by volunteering to act as convenors as part of our SORP engagement work. Enhancing the SORP will support charities deliver better financial reporting that meets the expectations of the public.

Helen Martin, Chief Executive of the Charities Regulator, Ireland said:

The Charities Regulator regards the Charity SORP as an important means for charities to achieve greater levels of accountability. Engagement with the charities sector is key to the development of the SORP. We therefore very much welcome The Wheel as the convenor of the larger charities engagement strand – the first organisation from the Republic of Ireland to play a critical role in this new engagement process.

Ends

Notes to editors

1. For more information about the SORP, the SORP-making body and advisory SORP Committee, please refer to [this dedicated website](#).

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Sir Philip Barton presents credentials as British High Commissioner to India

Sir Philip said:

It is the greatest honour and privilege of my diplomatic career to represent the UK in this wonderful country. The UK-India relationship is remarkable and we share an unparalleled breadth and depth of connection. There is a deep commitment across the British government, industry and civil society to grow that relationship even further: developing our trade and economic partnership, now that the UK has left the EU; tackling the global challenges of climate change and green recovery, acting together as a force for good in the world; and working closely as partners to keep our countries safe and secure.

I recognise that I am arriving at an extraordinarily difficult time. Corona virus is without precedent in modern times, but it has also brought out the importance of the modern partnership between the UK and India: from our excellent collaboration in developing and manufacturing a vaccine for global distribution, to securing essential medical supplies for health workers, to our joint

determination to “build back better” from this crisis. I see my job as ensuring that this crucial partnership continues to prosper.

We often speak of the “living bridge” of people, ideas and institutions that tie the UK and India together. I, too, am part of that bridge. My mother was born in Shimla and I was posted here in Delhi in the 1990s. I met my wife, Amanda, when we both lived and worked here and we named our daughter ‘India’ – not knowing I would return one day as High Commissioner.

I am delighted to be back and look forward to continuing to build on what PM Modi has called an ‘unbeatable combination’ – a forward-looking, modern partnership between the UK and India.

Further information

Sir Philip joined The Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1986 and has previously served as the Director General, Consular and Security in London, as the British High Commissioner to Pakistan, and as Deputy Ambassador in Washington. Prior to arriving in New Delhi last month, Sir Philip helped the UK government adapt its long-term planning to the pandemic. His full bio is available online, [here](#).

Sir Philip succeeds Sir Dominic Asquith, who served as High Commissioner to India from April 2016 to January 2020. Jan Thompson, who served as Acting High Commissioner from February to June 2020, has returned to her role as Deputy High Commissioner.

For media queries, please contact:

Sally Hedley, Head of Communications
Press and Communications, British High Commission,
Chanakyapuri, New Delhi 110021. Tel: 24192100

Mail to: BHCMediaDelhi@fco.gov.uk

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