

Emergency byelaw to protect Severn salmon stocks extended

Following a request by the Environment Agency for an extension of the emergency byelaw to protect salmon in the River Severn and its estuary, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Victoria Prentis, has extended the emergency byelaw for 6 months.

The emergency byelaw came into effect last June initially for 12 months. It was introduced after a review of data showed a significant reduction in salmon stock levels in the Severn.

Under the byelaw, draft net and putcher fishing in the Severn estuary is prohibited. Lave net fishing operates on a catch and release basis only. The emergency byelaw also means rod and line fishing is on a catch and release basis only on the whole of the Severn throughout the rod season, which lasts until 7 October.

The move to protect this salmon population came after last year's figures on the stock levels for the Severn, as well as the Wye and Usk, showed numbers were extremely low. Salmon from the Severn estuary migrate to the Wye and Usk.

Figures this year show salmon numbers remain low, so every fish returned safely could contribute to improving the spawning population this autumn.

Reducing the taking of salmon is only one part of the Environment Agency's larger national programme to protect salmon stocks. Actions taken by the Environment Agency and its partners that contribute to protecting salmon stocks include removing barriers, improving water quality, implementing better agricultural practices and addressing unsustainable water abstractions.

The Environment Agency is taking these actions because of the need to protect salmon stocks that have declined to unsustainable population levels in many of our rivers. The decline in the numbers of wild salmon, seen not just in English rivers but throughout the North Atlantic, is a major concern and the Environment Agency is determined to protect the future of this important species.

The provisional 2019 declared rod catches on the Rivers Severn, Usk and Wye are the worst on record despite good angling conditions and the removal of all nets operating in the Severn estuary.

David Hudson, Environment Manager for Gloucestershire, said:

We are concerned that the number of returning adult salmon continues to decline despite the current protection measures we have in place. We will closely monitor salmon stocks throughout

this year, with a view to introducing more long term protection byelaws if required following consultation, in the hope of increasing the numbers of this iconic species.

Fishing is only one of a number of factors that have led to the fall in salmon stocks in the Severn; environmental factors at critical times in the salmon's life cycle, such as recent floods and warm winters, also play a part.

We understand the concerns of fishermen, but only by the use of immediate and robust action, with cooperation from others, can we prevent the collapse of salmon stocks in the Severn in the future. Flooding earlier in the year and the coronavirus pandemic has prevented the Environment Agency from carrying out much of its planned engagement with fishermen, but we will look to do that as soon as practical.

Note to editors

- The power to make an emergency byelaw to prohibit the taking of salmon is set out in Schedule 27 to the Water Resources Act 1991 (as inserted by s.225(2) of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009).
- Fines for breaking fisheries byelaws are unlimited.
- Current legislation requires all salmon caught before 16 June by rod and line to be returned.
- Legislation already exists to prohibit the sale of any salmon caught by rod and line.
- The average number of salmon caught in the Severn, taken over the last 10 years is 300 salmon caught by 300 fishermen; in 2018, 200 people fished the river, with only 156 fish caught.
- Other countries that have closed salmon net fisheries include, Republic of Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Faroese fisheries.
- Salmon stocks in the Severn are now classed as "Probably at Risk"
- Reducing exploitation is one action of the 'Salmon Five Point Approach' which has been jointly developed and committed to by a wide range of partners including Government, Atlantic Salmon Trust, Angling Trust, River Trusts, Wild Trout Trust, Salmon and Trout Conservation Association and the Institute of Fisheries Management.
- Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has implemented mandatory catch and release byelaws and method restrictions for the 2020 fishing season on all rivers in Wales including the cross border rivers (Dee and Wye). They also implemented an emergency salmon protection byelaw in October 2019 requiring 100% catch and release in the Welsh parts of the River Severn. This byelaw expires in October 2020.
- Putchers are conical baskets traditionally made from natural materials, but more recently from steel. They are fished in ranks, often containing many hundreds of baskets, arranged in up to 3 or 4 tiers and positioned out across the tidal flow. Fish are caught as they fall back on the ebb tide and are trapped, to be retrieved once the rank is exposed at low tide. Some ranks also catch fish on flood tides.

- Lave nets are large triangular hand-held nets that are used by fishermen to intercept and catch individual salmon. Lave net fishing is a rare and specialised form of salmon net fishing and is currently practiced in only two areas of England.
 - Draft nets are conventional seine nets fished in a way to encircle and catch salmon by use of a boat and hauling the net into shore.
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[Loneliness Minister: Write letters to people isolating at home](#)

People should consider writing letters and cards to those still isolating as lockdown measures ease to ensure they don't feel forgotten, the Loneliness Minister urged today (15 June).

Baroness Barran is encouraging the public to reach out to friends, family and neighbours who are elderly or otherwise clinically vulnerable. This includes those who are pregnant, aged 70 or older or with an underlying health condition.

This builds on the Prime Minister's announcement last week that single adult households – those living alone or single parents with children under 18 – can now form a "support bubble" with one other household, meaning they can visit and stay overnight. This move will particularly support those who live by themselves, who are lonely and struggling with being unable to see friends and family.

As part of the #Let'sTalkLoneliness campaign, which launched a year ago today, the Government is offering helpful advice to tackle loneliness, such as ways to reach out to someone who might be feeling lonely, how to volunteer safely, joining an online group, and signposting to sources of support.

A government partnership with the Post Office and Royal Mail will see a "Let's Talk Loneliness" postmark stamped on most letters delivered during Loneliness Awareness Week (15-19 June), to raise awareness of loneliness and help tackle the stigma.

To mark the week, the Loneliness Minister will also be writing letters to check in on friends and family, and is encouraging the public to do the same and make connections. This follows new research from the Royal Mail which shows that nearly three quarters of people (74%) feel that writing letters has positive mental health benefits.

Today, the Government has also announced the organisations who will receive a share of £5 million to reduce loneliness, which was pledged as part of the Chancellor's £750 million support package for charities. The successful organisations are providing vital support for a wide range of vulnerable

people at risk of loneliness at this time, including the elderly, veterans, and people with disabilities.

Minister for Loneliness, Baroness Barran, said:

The last few months have brought loneliness to the forefront of our minds. We all have a role in being kind and looking out for each other, and as some of us begin to regain some normality we cannot forget those who may need to stay at home for longer and could be at risk of feeling lonely.

Writing letters might be a slightly forgotten art but it's more important than ever to connect with people, and putting pen to paper is an excellent way of making sure our friends, family and neighbours know we're thinking about them.

The beneficiaries of the £5 million loneliness fund are:

- **The English Football League Trust** will receive £810,000 to make onward grants to its Football Club Community Organisations in 32 deprived locations across England, with the aim of connecting more older people at risk of loneliness. Activities include befriending phone calls, online social groups, a pen-pal scheme, social action from young people taking part in the National Citizen Service and socially distanced 'garden gate' conversations.
- **The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen And Families Association – Forces Help (SSAFA)** will use £500,000 to support veterans experiencing loneliness and their families across the UK. The funding will support a new socially-distanced visiting service, expansion of telephone helpline, a one-to-one mentoring service and targeted activities for groups more at risk of loneliness.
- **Sense** will receive £500,000 to support children and families and adults with complex disabilities. The funding will enable them to expand and scale up their 'Connect 4 Service' which helps disabled people form social connections and includes buddying services, online activities for young carers, specialist virtual childcare and family sessions and activities sent through the post.
- £500,000 will go to the **Alzheimer's Society** who will continue to support people with dementia and their carers through welfare and companion calls to support their wellbeing and provide informal chats and weekly 'singing for the brain' sessions – vocal exercises that help improve brain activity and well-being.

- **The British Red Cross** will receive £610,000 to support young people, BAME communities, refugees, the digitally excluded and people more at risk of loneliness because of their health issues. It will enable them to expand their connecting communities work, with a focus on virtual group activities and 1:1 support to digitally excluded people, helping to get them online. People living in Durham, Barking and Dagenham, Stockport and Plymouth will be among the first to benefit.
- £500,000 for **Home-Start UK** will help them provide onward grants to local Home Starts to support new mums at risk of loneliness. Their service will include regular telephone calls, online groups to connect families with each other and working with local partners to support crisis response.
- **The Royal National Institute of Blind People** has received £500,000 to further support blind and partially sighted people through adapting and expanding telephone groups, online resources and piloting socially-distanced face to face support.
- £500,000 will be allocated to **Mind** who will make onward grants to local groups to provide mental health support for older people, new parents, those who are disabled, digitally excluded and young people. This will include listening, befriending and wellbeing support services targeting these groups.
- **The Carers Trust** will receive £500,000 to make onward grants to local charities in their network.

David Gold, Director of Public Affairs and Policy, Royal Mail, said:

Handwritten correspondence is a very powerful way of connecting and showing someone close that you care; particularly during these difficult and sometimes isolating times. Keeping the nation connected is of vital importance to us, so we're delighted to partner with the Government on this initiative.

Nick Read, Chief Executive of the Post Office, said:

Loneliness can have serious impacts on a person's health and wellbeing. As a business, we are all about keeping people connected and there are so many ways to keep in touch with friends and family today. Letters can add a real personal touch and make someone's day. We are stronger together and community has never been as important as it is now.

The Tackling Loneliness Network, a group of high-profile charities, businesses, organisations and public figures, will have their inaugural meeting this week to explore initiatives to connect groups at risk of loneliness and isolation, encourage individuals and organisations to take practical actions, and consider how to sustain the good community nature from the coronavirus outbreak. The group was convened by the Government in collaboration with the Connection Coalition, organised by the Jo Cox Foundation.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Three tangible actions for anyone feeling lonely and three actions for people wanting to help

If you are lonely you can:

- Keep in touch with friends, family and neighbours
- Ask for help if you need shopping, medicine or are feeling lonely
- Set a routine with online activities, regular tasks or by volunteering

If you are worried about someone who is lonely:

- Phone a friend or send a letter to a family member you think may be lonely
- Smile, wave or chat from a safe distance with a neighbour
- Help out through volunteering by picking up food, medicine or by offering regular conversation to someone living alone

For further information see [LetsTalkLoneliness.co.uk](https://letsstalkloneliness.co.uk)

Over the last two years, the UK Government has been leading the way on tackling loneliness:

- It created the world's first Minister for Loneliness and published the world's first Government loneliness strategy in October 2018, containing 60 commitments from nine Government departments. Implementation of the strategy is ongoing and the Government published a first annual report in January 2020 setting out our progress;

- It launched the first Government fund dedicated to reducing loneliness worth £11.5 million, which is supporting 126 projects to transform the lives of thousands of lonely people across England;
- It launched the inaugural #LetsTalkLoneliness campaign in June 2019 to help raise awareness and tackle stigma.

Members of the Tackling Loneliness Network include: BBC, Premier League, Facebook, ITV, British Red Cross, Jo Cox Foundation, Vodafone, Zurich, Nationwide Building Society, Campaign to End Loneliness, BT, Post Office, Royal Mail, Ukie, Aviva, Sports and Recreation Alliance, English Football League, JC Decaux UK, Samaritans, Age UK, Arts Council England, Co-op Foundation, The Cares Family, University College London, Libraries Connected, Sense, Manchester Museum, Nesta Challenges and Seema Kennedy, former Co-Chair of the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness.

Royal Mail cannot guarantee that specific items of mail posted during the period 15 – 19 June 2020 will include the #Let'sTalkLoneliness postmark.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size for national statistics was 2,082 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 7th – 8th May 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

[Culture Secretary and the Duke of Cambridge join sports stars to talk mental health across UK sport](#)

The Culture Secretary and The Duke of Cambridge have joined some of Britain's biggest sport stars to discuss the issue of mental health across UK sport, as elite athletes and many of the wider population return to work following an easing of lockdown restrictions.

The virtual roundtable saw Oliver Dowden and The Duke joined by British sporting greats who together have accumulated more than 400 caps for their country, 17 gold medals at Olympic or Paralympic Games, seven grand slams, and won a Davis Cup and Rugby World Cup.

Many of those who attended spoke about their own personal experiences and how maintaining good mental health helped them be better athletes. Drawing upon their careers and work in sport, broadcasting and charities, the discussion was an opportunity to share perspectives on the barriers that have previously prevented some sportspeople from identifying and accessing the support they

need, and how there is a generational shift on attitudes to this issue which is helping our future stars.

They also discussed how elite sport could lead the way in supporting the mental and physical health of the wider population, as coronavirus lockdown restrictions are eased and those who cannot work from home return to their workplaces where it is safe to do so.

Those who attended included former Arsenal and Lionesses footballer Alex Scott, England's 2003 Rugby World Cup-winning fly half Jonny Wilkinson, and the most successful female Paralympians and Winter Olympians of all time, Dame Sarah Storey and Lizzy Yarnold.

Seven-time grand slam doubles winner and Davis Cup champion Jamie Murray, multi-medal winning Paralympic swimmer Ellie Simmonds, former Tottenham Hotspur captain and England international Ledley King, and Team GB and England international hockey player and Olympic gold medallist Maddie Hinch also joined the video call alongside representatives from UK Sport, Sport England and mental health charity Mind.

The roundtable was convened to inform a review of the Government's Mental Health and Elite Sport Action Plan as well as the continuing work on the return of competitive elite sport and opportunities being explored to use sport in promoting messages around mental health.

Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said:

Looking after our mental health is as important as our physical health, particularly through the pandemic which has brought about additional stress and change.

The resumption of sport behind closed doors coincides with many people returning to work too, so it's a good time to make sure everyone knows support is available.

It was great to be joined by HRH the Duke of Cambridge, mental health organisations and some of the biggest names in British sport to talk about mental health. Sport is leading the way in this important conversation, and I pay tribute to football and the Duke for leading a generational shift to attitudes on mental health.

During the call, The Duke of Cambridge said:

Through the Heads Up campaign, the football community has come together to do its part in driving lasting change by encouraging people to open up about their mental wellbeing, at the same time as embedding a mentally healthy culture across the sport.

I believe that there is more we can do collectively to ensure this

is replicated across all of sport. And that is why I am so happy to be here with you all to discuss how we can make that a reality. We have a unique opportunity to use the tragedy of the pandemic to bring about positive change. As the sporting world begins to return it is vital that we talk about the mental wellbeing of our sportspeople and fans.

The Duke reiterated on the call the importance of embedding a mentally healthy culture within sport, explaining that in due course, the football family will be coming together around a joint commitment to making football a mentally healthy environment for all, as a legacy of the Heads Up campaign.

Paul Farmer CBE, Chief Executive of Mind, said:

We've all come to understand the importance of looking after our mental health during difficult times. Mind's support of the Heads Up campaign, our work with the EFL, and with organisations across the sports sector, shows that attitudes around mental health are beginning to change.

This is a vital moment to work with all elite sports bodies and sports professionals themselves to ensure that the support available for their mental health is on a par with physical health. We are also keen to see the necessary investment and resources to achieve this prioritised accordingly.

The importance of the mental health of elite athletes was highlighted in government guidance supporting both the return to training for elite and professional athletes and the return to competitive top level sport behind closed doors on June 1, announced by the Culture Secretary.

The Government's Mental Health and Elite Sport Action Plan, published in October 2018, was also informed by athletes, sports and mental health organisations. It has improved mental health education and training across elite sport, and is ensuring parity with physical health is promoted. Access to confidential sources of support and training delivered by mental health ambassadors is now commonplace across the sector.

Spearheaded by The Duke of Cambridge, the 'Heads Up' campaign, launched by the Football Association (FA) and Heads Together, is using the popularity of football to change the conversation on mental health and signpost support for those in need. On Friday the FA announced that this season's FA Cup Final, provisionally scheduled to take place on Saturday 1 August 2020, will be renamed the 'Heads Up FA Cup Final.'

[Letter from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to Scottish and Welsh Governments](#)

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Michael Gove, has written to Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Europe and External Affairs, Mike Russell MSP, Counsel General and Minister for European Transition, Jeremy Miles MS, and Minister for Europe and International Development, Jenny Gilruth MSP.

[New study to understand effect of COVID-19 on veterans](#)

The work is sponsored by the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) and will be undertaken by the world leading King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR), King's College London.

The study will look at whether COVID-19 has had any specific impact on the veteran community in the UK. This in turn will allow policy makers in government to understand potential issues affecting veterans and respond accordingly based on expert advice and evidence.

The work will collect data on loneliness, social support, alcohol consumption, mental health, gambling and general well-being. It will also explore the resilience of veterans and whether their experiences in the Armed Forces have actually better prepared them for the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data will be collected through an online survey starting on Monday 15th June.

The OVA has been working closely with the charity sector throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This has included the creation of a £6 million COVID-19 impact fund, to support charities to continue their essential work during this challenging period. This new study is a further important step to ensuring that government continues to drive forward its ambition to ensure the UK is the best place to be a veteran anywhere in the world.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Johnny Mercer said:

We have seen a great contribution from veterans during the pandemic; from the amazing Captain Sir Tom Moore, to all those who have volunteered in their communities.

It is important that we understand the effect of this terrible pandemic on the veteran community too, so we can provide effective support, tailored to their needs.

This new study is an important part of that.

Co-Director of the KCMHR, King's College London, Professor Sir Simon Wessely said:

This study has been measuring the health and well-being of a large sample of our Armed Forces, starting in 2003. We have followed their progress, some for nearly 20 years, through service in conflicts such as Iraq and Afghanistan, and then as many returned to civilian life.

Now it is time to see how they are coping with a different challenge, that of COVID-19.

The first results of this new work focussed on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to be published in autumn/winter 2020.

KCMHR will draw on their world-leading research into veterans' health and for this study researchers will be approaching those veterans living in the UK who took part in the last KCMHR health and wellbeing study (2014-2016).

This forms part of a unique cohort of 20,000 former service personnel that was originally created in 2003 to monitor the mental health and social consequences of deployment and has become a reliable and trusted source of information on mental health and wellbeing of both serving personnel and veterans.

The Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA), which was created last year, is ensuring that the whole of government is delivering better outcomes for veterans, particularly in areas such as mental health, employment and housing. It is working in partnership with government departments, the Devolved Administrations and charities to coordinate activity across the United Kingdom.

The Role of the OVA includes:

- Pulling together all functions of government, and better coordinating charity sector provision, in order to ensure this nation's life-long duty to those who have served
- Ensuring that every single veteran and their family knows where to turn to access support when required
- Helping to generate a 'single view of the veteran' by making better use of data to understand veterans' needs and where gaps in provision exist
- Improving the perception of veterans