

[Lord Ahmad statement on the sentencing of human rights activist and journalist Huang Qi](#)

We are deeply concerned by the sentencing of human rights activist and journalist Huang Qi to 12 years in prison.

In 2018 independent experts on the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded that Mr Huang's detention contravened the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and urged the Chinese authorities to release him immediately.

Mr Huang's case and sentencing raises strong concerns about media freedom, due process and the rule of law in China. We urge the authorities to uphold the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by China's constitution and international law.

We also urge the authorities to ensure Mr Huang, who is understood to be seriously ill, receives adequate medical care and to facilitate meetings between Mr Huang and his family and legal counsel as soon as possible.

[Here we go! Football fans urged to remember basic rules of road](#)

It comes as a snap poll by Highways England found that 29 per cent of supporters expect to travel more than 300 miles to away games over the new season. Sixteen per cent planned to travel a total of more than 500 miles to attend away games.

With some 67 per cent of those travelling to away games saying they get there by car, Highways England is reminding football fans to remember the basic rules of motorway driving to stay safe.

The 2019/2020 English Football League season gets under way this weekend for many clubs and their supporters with the Premier League kicking off the following weekend.

However, it seems some supporters are facing a bit of an own goal when it comes to carrying out basic vehicle checks. Only 18 per cent of fans surveyed by Highways England check their vehicles every time they set off for an away game.

Seven per cent said they never check their vehicles before heading off for

away games.

A new Highways England [safety campaign](#) is under way highlighting the basics of motorway driving, including what to do if you break down, keeping left except when overtaking, and obeying red X and variable speed limit signs.

Ignoring a red X has been an offence since 1988, with drivers facing a £100 fine and three points on their licence. A new law was introduced last month which will enable this to be enforced by cameras.

Red Xs are displayed on overhead electronic signs to close lanes for several reasons such as an accident or breakdown, debris in the carriageway, or because of a person or animal on the road. Lanes are also closed to help emergency services get through or to provide a safe space for road workers.

Before the fans set off to support their beloved teams, they are also being warned to carry out basic vehicle checks as one breakdown is reported every two minutes during the final weekend in July and first weekend in August on motorways and major A-roads.

Drivers should also take a few minutes to plan their journeys in advance, checking that no roadworks are planned on the route. Live updates on traffic flow can be found on [Traffic England](#).

Melanie Clarke, Customer Service Director at Highways England, said:

The start of the football season is a highlight of the year for supporters across the country and for many signals the start of hundreds of miles travelling home and away with their clubs.

We want everyone's journeys to games to be as safe and smooth as possible – the excitement should be on the pitch not on the way there – and we need drivers to play their part.

By carrying out simple vehicle checks before setting off and following the basics of motorway driving, road users can help us all meet our goal – to keep traffic moving.

The FA are backing Highways England's safety messages. Tom Legg, FA Head of Transport, said:

The FA are delighted to support Highways England's campaign to promote safe driving across the motorway network. Hundreds of thousands of football supporters follow their team up and down the country every weekend, and the journey to and from the stadium is an integral part of the matchday experience.

As the new season begins, it's timely to remind fans to check their vehicles before setting off and to adhere to motorway regulations, so to help ensure a smooth and safe journey for all.

Highways England says simple checks are a way to make sure the vehicle is roadworthy. Things to consider are:

- Tyres: ensure tyre pressures are suitable for the load and check the condition of tyres, including the spare. Look out for cuts or wear and make sure the tyres have a minimum tread depth of 1.6mm, which is the legal limit
- Engine oil: check oil levels regularly and top up if needed. Take your car back to the garage if you're topping up more than usual
- Water: always keep your screen wash topped up so you can clear debris or dirt off your windscreen
- Lights: if your indicators, hazard lights, headlights, fog lights, reverse lights or brake lights are not functioning properly, you are putting yourself and your family at risk. In addition, your vehicle may fail its MoT
- Fuel: before setting out make sure you have enough fuel to get to your destination

Tips for motorway driving

- Never drive in a lane closed by a red X
- Keep to the speed limits shown on the gantries or signs
- A hard shoulder is always identified by a solid white unbroken line – if there's no speed limit displayed above it or a red X is displayed, do not use it except in emergency
- A broken white line indicates a normal running lane
- If the hard shoulder is being used as an extra lane, use the designated emergency areas for emergencies
- If your vehicle experiences difficulties, eg warning light, exit the motorway immediately, if you can safely do so
- Most breakdowns are preventable – keep your car well maintained, check your tyres and make sure you have enough fuel for your journey. Don't stop except in an emergency. If you have to stop make sure you know what to do.

For more information about driving on motorways, visit our [motorways page](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

New studies will help drive protections for beetles

Natural England has today (1 August) published the first comprehensive reviews for two groups of beetles in Great Britain for over two decades, offering a vital insight into what needs to be done to protect dozens of species.

The reviews paint a picture for 143 species of rove beetles and longhorn beetle across England, Scotland and Wales, to help inform the conservation needs of these species.

The findings will help ecologists to protect beetles, which are an important food source for many animals and also play a crucial role in the natural world by recycling decaying organic matter.

The reviews are also the first to apply the [International Union for Conservation of Nature's \(IUCN\) Red List](#) criteria for the assessment of species threat status to these beetle groups, establishing the conservation status of these ecologically important species against international standards.

Allan Drewitt, Natural England Senior Specialist, said:

These reviews are critical to our understanding of these species' conservation status and their ecological requirements. They reveal how changes in land use in modern Britain are affecting wildlife and what we need to do if we are to safeguard its future.

That is why we are working with JNCC and Buglife through the Species Status project to produce these reviews.

The reports include habitat management measures which landowners and land managers can take to help protect the habitats of these vulnerable species as well as a wide range of other wildlife.

Craig Macadam, Conservation Director with Buglife, said:

Recent reports have shown that invertebrates are facing an extinction crisis. Worldwide, thousands of invertebrate species are declining and many are heading towards extinction.

Each invertebrate species plays a unique and important role in the web of life but once lost they cannot be replaced. Many invertebrates have incredible life stories yet to be told and we literally don't know what we are on the brink of losing.

These reports are incredibly important, providing the information needed to prioritise conservation action and prevent further invertebrate extinctions.

Monitoring the status and abundance of beetles can provide an important indication of the health of natural ecosystems.

Steps to protect beetles

Land managers and landowners can protect and manage habitats of importance to beetles and other wildlife by:

- managing ancient parkland, woodland and wood pasture to maintain or increase the availability of standing and fallen dead wood
- maintaining or restore connecting habitats by conserving and planting hedgerows and in-field trees
- restoring open coppice conditions in woodlands
- increasing the number of young open-grown trees in parkland and wood pasture to provide the ancient or veteran trees of the future
- providing a continuity of traditional management such as the annual cutting of wetland vegetation and providing vegetation litter heaps.

[Natural England](#) is the government's adviser for the natural environment in England and protects habitats that support invertebrates including through notifying [Sites of Special Scientific Interest \(SSSI\)](#) and [National Nature Reserves \(NNRs\)](#).

Background

The reports are available online:

Rove beetles

[‘A review of the status of the beetles of Great Britain: The Staphylinidae: Tachyporinae beetles \(rove beetles\)’](#) examined 68 species in Britain under the IUCN Red List Criteria. One species is ‘Extinct’, one is ‘Critically Endangered’, one is ‘Vulnerable’, two are ‘Threatened’ and two are ‘Near Threatened’ meaning they may become Threatened in the near future as they do not meet all of the Red List criteria.

In line with previous findings, only one was found to be ‘Extinct’ – *Tachinus scapularis*, which was found in decaying vegetation, was last recorded in Greenwich in 1953.

The greatest threats to this group of rove beetles, in common with many other insects, are habitat destruction and fragmentation resulting from agricultural intensification, the expansion of infrastructure for housing and the lack of traditional land management.

Longhorn beetles

The Cerambycidae or Longhorn Beetles family contains some of the best known

and very familiar British beetles, such as the harlequin beetle *Rutpela maculata*, the wasp beetle *Clytus arietis* and musk beetle *Aromia moschata*.

[‘A review of the status of the beetles of Great Britain: Longhorn Beetles \(Cerambycidae\)’](#) looked at 75 different species in this category and found that three species are ‘Extinct’, two ‘Critically Endangered’, one ‘Endangered’, one ‘Vulnerable’ and three ‘Near Threatened’.

In line with previous findings, the three extinct species – Red-collared longhorn beetle, *Obrium cantharinum* and the great wasp beetle – all have last recorded sightings prior to 1938.

The biggest threat to this group of beetles includes widespread clearance of dead and decaying wood from the countryside and the lack of new generations of veteran trees developing.

The Species Status project

The Species Status project is a recent initiative, providing up-to-date assessments of the threat status of taxa using the internationally accepted Red List guidelines developed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) IUCN Standards and Petitions Subcommittee, 2017); (IUCN, 2012a; 2012b). It is the successor to [the Joint Nature Conservation Committee \(JNCC\) Species Status Assessment project](#) which ended in 2008.

Under the Species Status project, the UK’s statutory nature conservation agencies, specialist societies and NGOs will initiate, resource and publish Red Lists and other status reviews of selected taxonomic groups for Great Britain. All publications will explain the rationale for the assessments made. The approved threat statuses will be entered into [the JNCC spreadsheet of species conservation designations](#). This publication is one in a series of reviews to be produced under the auspices of the new project.

[Buglife has a range of resources to help people build bug hotels and homes for beetles.](#)

Piano supplier fined £3.7m for illegally preventing price discounts

The move comes after the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) issued a [Statement of Objections](#) against Casio Electronics Co. Ltd (Casio) in April 2019. Casio has now admitted that, between 2013 and 2018, it broke competition law by implementing a policy designed to restrict retailer freedom to set prices online, requiring digital pianos and keyboards to be sold at or above a minimum price.

Casio's actions had included telling retailers to sell digital pianos and keyboards online at or above a certain price. It then monitored their prices and pressured retailers to modify or raise their prices online when they fell below the specified minimum price. This kind of illegal practice, known as resale price maintenance (RPM), often means that customers miss out on the best possible prices because, even when they shop around, they find all retailers tend to be selling at around the same price.

Casio used new software that makes it easier to monitor online prices in real time and ensure widespread compliance with its pricing policy. It also meant that individual retailers had less incentive to discount for fear of being caught and potentially sanctioned. Casio's monitoring was also helped by retailers reporting to Casio other retailers which were discounting its instruments.

Ann Pope, CMA Senior Director of Antitrust, said:

A digital piano or keyboard can be a significant purchase, and customers should be able to shop around for a good price. Casio's illegal action – telling retailers not to offer their musical instruments at discounted prices – made it harder for customers to shop around for a better price and meant they risked paying over the odds.

At the CMA, we take this type of anti-competitive practice seriously and we will not hesitate to impose penalties where we establish the law has been broken. That's why we have imposed our largest ever fine for this type of offence on Casio at £3.7 million

As a result of Casio's illegal actions, the CMA has imposed a £3.7 million fine; this fine was discounted to reflect the fact that the company admitted to the illegal behaviour and agreed to co-operate with the CMA, so shortening the CMA's investigation.

The CMA has produced [guidance for businesses](#) about RPM so they make sure they play by the rules and avoid fines. Businesses can also watch the CMA's short film that explains what RPM looks like in practice.

[What is resale price maintenance \(RPM\)?](#)

A public version of the CMA's final infringement decision will be published in due course.

1. The Chapter I prohibition of the Competition Act 1998 covers anti-competitive agreements, concerted practices and decisions by associations of undertakings which have as their object or effect the prevention, restriction or distortion of competition within the UK or a part of it and which may affect trade within the UK or a part of it. Similarly, Article 101 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) prohibits such anti-competitive agreements, concerted

practices and decisions by associations of undertakings which may affect trade between EU member states.

2. EU and UK competition authorities have been very active in investigating resale price maintenance in recent years and have together issued several infringement decisions. The European Commission fined four companies for resale price maintenance in July 2018: [Philips](#), [Pioneer](#), [Asus](#), [Denon](#).
3. The fine amount was discounted by 20% to reflect the company's admission of illegal conduct.
4. The CMA fined three other companies for online resale price maintenance: one in August 2016, in the [light fittings sector](#) and 2 in May 2016; one in the [bathroom fittings sector](#) and one in the [commercial refrigeration sector](#).
5. In 2018 the CMA issued 19 [warning letters](#) and 3 [advisory letters](#) about resale price maintenance: alerting companies to the illegal nature of this practice and prompting action to ensure compliance.
6. Digital pianos and keyboards are a significant part of the wider UK musical instruments sector which is estimated at around £440 million annually. Casio's own turnover in relation to digital pianos and keyboards is less than £10 million and is the basis of the overall level of the fine.
7. Any business found to have infringed the Competition Act 1998 can be fined up to 10% of its annual worldwide group turnover. In calculating financial penalties, the CMA takes into account a number of factors including the seriousness of the infringement(s), turnover in the relevant market and any mitigating and aggravating factors.
8. The decision is addressed to Casio Electronics Co. Ltd which the CMA provisionally considers was directly involved in the alleged infringement and to Casio Computer Co. Ltd as its ultimate parent company.
9. The CMA has not addressed the decision to any retailer. This is because the CMA has applied Rule 10(2) of its Competition Act 1998 Rules, according to which it may address an infringement decision to fewer than all the persons who were party to the relevant agreement/s.
10. The CMA has four other ongoing antitrust investigations in the musical instruments and equipment sector: cases [50565-3](#), [50565-4](#), [50565-5](#),

11. Media queries should be directed to press@cma.gov.uk, on 020 3738 6460.

UK deploys more public health experts to DRC for Ebola outbreak response

The [UK Public Health Rapid Support Team \(UK-PHRST\)](#) is deploying more public health specialists to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), as the country's Ebola outbreak reaches the one-year mark.

Those being sent to support the DRC government's existing efforts include a data scientist, an epidemiologist (an expert in tracking outbreaks) and an infection and prevention control expert, who will work with local scientists.

The deployment is at the request of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN), following the recent decision to declare the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

The UK-PHRST has worked closely with the DRC government, WHO and other partners to scale up its response since August 2018, when the current outbreak started. Since that time, there have also been confirmed cases in neighbouring Uganda.

The team's work is vital to help track the spread of disease, and inform the best approaches to tackling it.

The UK-PHRST can rapidly deploy public health experts within a 48 hour window, to strengthen a country's response to outbreaks, which helps to stop the spread of disease and save lives.

Since it was established in 2016, the UK-PHRST has responded to 10 global outbreaks, including Lassa fever in Nigeria, diphtheria in the displaced Rohingya population in Bangladesh, and pneumonic and bubonic plague in Madagascar.

Professor Daniel Bausch, Director of the UK-PHRST said:

"The Congolese people continue to show great resilience in the face of this outbreak.

"However, this is the worst Ebola outbreak in its history and its effects are devastating, with hundreds of lives lost.

“We are assisting the DRC government to help them build on their response, and will continue to monitor the situation closely and provide all the technical support we can.”

Alok Sharma, Secretary of State for International Development said:

“Ebola has already taken far too many lives in the DRC. Shockingly it has wiped out entire families and, a year after this outbreak started, it is showing no sign of slowing down.

“The UK has led the way in tackling this killer disease and we can be proud of our support to create a life-saving Ebola vaccine which has inoculated 180,000 people so far. Today’s announcement that more UK health experts will be deployed to the DRC shows our strong, ongoing commitment to contain the outbreak.

“Diseases like Ebola have no respect for borders. This could spread beyond DRC. It is essential the rest of the international community steps up to help. If we don’t act now, many thousands more lives could be lost.”

The UK-PHRST is a collaborative effort led by Public Health England (PHE) and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), funded by UK Aid from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

It continually monitors infectious diseases and other hazards globally, identifying situations where specialist expertise could prevent these threats from turning into global outbreaks.

The team also conducts innovative research to improve epidemic preparedness and response, and supports countries to build national capacity to respond to outbreaks.

The public health risk to the UK regarding the current Ebola outbreak remains negligible to very low.