

Press release: Protect birds when building, says James Brokenshire

Developers must take more care to protect the habitats of wildlife during building work, Communities Secretary James Brokenshire MP warned today (8 April 2019).

Following increasing concern over netting being placed in trees and hedgerows ahead of building work near housing developments, developers have been reminded of their legal obligation to consider the impact of a project on local wildlife and where necessary, take precautionary action to protect their habitats.

In a letter to leading developers, the Communities Secretary emphasised that birds are protected under the Wildlife Countryside Act 1981, and that mitigation plans will need to show how developers will avoid or manage any negative effects on protected species during their work.

During building work, it is common practice for netting to be placed over trees and hedgerows, but this can be used unnecessarily and trap wildlife.

If developers do not follow their obligations, the Secretary of State has not ruled out further action to protect our country's valuable ecological system.

The revised planning rulebook is also already clear that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising the impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

But this government is going further, announcing plans to require developers to deliver biodiversity net gain through the forthcoming Environment Bill. This will mean habitats for wildlife must be left in a measurably better state than they were before any development.

The Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

Whilst building new homes is vital, we must take every care to avoid unnecessary loss of habitats that provide much-needed space for nature, including birds.

Developments should enhance natural environments, not destroy them. Netting trees and hedgerows is only likely to be appropriate where it is genuinely needed to protect birds from harm during development.

I hope developers will take these words on board and play their full role to make sure we can deliver new communities in an environmentally sustainable way.

Martin Harper, the RSPB's director for conservation said:

We cannot keep trying to squeeze nature into smaller and smaller spaces or demand that wildlife fits in with our plans. Across the UK wildlife is vanishing at an alarming rate, and our planning system must play a vital role in not just reversing this decline but helping nature to recover.

Tree and hedge removal should be completed outside of nesting season. However, if there is absolutely no alternative, then netting must be used sparingly in line with the legal duties and responsibilities on developers, including regular checks to ensure wildlife isn't getting trapped, injured or worse.

We are pleased to see the Secretary of State is acknowledging the concerns many people have about the use of netting, and how strongly we all feel about sharing our future neighbourhoods with nature rather than pushing it away.

Andrew Whitaker, planning director at the Home Builders Federation said:

Netting trees aligns with the relevant environmental requirements in instances where it has been agreed with the local authority that a tree has to be replaced. The industry is engaging with the RSPB to consider how we develop requirements that increase protections for wildlife whilst ensuring desperately needed homes are built without delay.

Last year housing developments incorporated around 9 million trees and shrubs making the industry one of the nation's biggest providers of new trees.

As we build the homes the country needs, the industry is committed to supporting and enhancing bio-diversity, proactively protecting wildlife and providing an overall increase in the number of trees

[Press release: New government measures to update crematoria provisions](#)

A package of measures to update crematoria to reflect the needs of different cultures and faiths in modern Britain has been announced today (8 April 2019).

The announcement follows the review of crematoria provision and facilities, where the government received around 150 responses from many faith and belief groups.

The plan will help make sure communities of all faiths have facilities that are fit for purpose and sensitive to their needs.

This includes a consultation to revise national guidance on the siting and design of crematoria, and an offer of support to community groups interested in operating their own crematoria.

Faith Minister, Lord Bourne said:

Cremations have become more and more common. This is why it is vital that there are high quality crematoria that respect cultural and religious traditions of all faiths and beliefs, and those of no faith.

This package of measures will make sure that local authorities and providers offer the appropriate facilities that reflect the communities they serve.

Cremations have become more and more common. In 2017 there were 467,748 cremations representing 77.05% of all deaths, with each crematorium having an average of 1,607 cremations in 2017.

The full package of measures to ensure crematoria are fit for purpose is:

- Revise national guidance on the siting and design of crematoria, subject to further consultation
- Offer support to community groups interested in operating their own crematoria or associated facilities
- Lord Bourne has written to local authorities to inform them that all reasonable steps should be taken to allow the needs of those with different faiths to be met in public buildings, encourage providers to be more transparent about their services, and have appropriate staff training to understand different faith requirements

The review into the size and provision of crematoria facilities was announced in autumn 2015, with a formal review published alongside the 2016 March Budget.

We received around 150 responses, of which 110 provided statistical information through our on-line survey. The majority of respondents were from the Hindu communities (particularly in North and West London and Leicester) but there was also representations from other faith and belief groups, and those of no faith. The responses highlighted (in order of priority):

- The capacity of crematoria to accommodate large groups as well as problems with car parking

- Difficulties with the design of crematoria (for example, fixed seating or catafalque) and a lack of facilities to carry out specific rituals (including separate prayer rooms, washing facilities, a viewing room to witness the committal of the coffin or proximity to water)
 - Difficulties with booking slots, slots being too short and/or having to pay higher prices for weekends
 - The need for new crematoria, and/or travelling long distances to access a crematorium in specific localities
 - Insensitive or inflexible iconography or other services, such as prayer books or music
 - A lack of awareness or insensitivity from some crematoria staff and funeral directors of the needs of the different faith and belief groups.
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News story: Civil news: new matter start increases and quality requirements

We're reviewing the wording of contract schedules for work under the 2018 Standard Civil Contract to clarify our quality requirements for new matter start increases.

Why are you doing this now?

We're consulting with your representative bodies on the wording in the 2018 Standard Civil Contract concerning new matter starts. This is because we want to make sure there is a clear understanding on the new matter start (NMS) thresholds that trigger higher 'lot' quality requirements. We have been discussing this with the Civil Contracts Consultative Group (CCCG).

Why do the quality requirements change?

These criteria were put place for different 'lots' in the 2018 civil contract procurement process. In some categories of law, providers had to meet additional requirements if bidding in higher lots.

Which categories of law are affected?

Family, housing, immigration and asylum, and mental health.

How do the thresholds work?

Providers must meet the higher requirements when their NMS allocation reaches an amount which would have required them to bid in a higher lot during the procurement process. The 'lot' boundaries are set out in the various Information for Applicants (IFA) published documents on GOV.UK – see below.

Can you provide an example?

A mental health provider successfully bidding in 'lot 2' will have been awarded 300 NMS. This provider will not be required to meet the higher quality requirements until their NMS allocation reaches 500. This was the number of NMS they would have received had they successfully bid in 'lot 3' in the procurement process.

How will this be shown in contract schedules?

We plan to amend footnote 8 of the contract schedule to clarify the position set out above. We are in talks about the final wording with consultative bodies, including the Bar Council, Law Society, Legal Aid Practitioners Group and the Advice Services Alliance.

Further information

[Information for Applicants](#)

You can contact your contract manager if you have any questions about this issue

[Speech: Jeremy Wright speaking at the launch of the Online Harms White Paper](#)

Thank you all for joining us and thanks to the British Library.

And for those of you who are wondering why we have come to the British Library to talk about the internet, let me offer an explanation.

Until the internet arrived, this was the world's great collection of human knowledge.

In this collection are the products of the greatest innovations and innovators in our history – from some of the earliest works created by the printing press to letters from Ada Lovelace, often known as the first computer programmer.

Elsewhere there are elements of our legal history, like one of the few remaining copies of the Magna Carta.

And it is on the interaction between the technological progress that drives our economy and the rules that protect our society that the White Paper we have published this morning is based.

Just as the invention of the printing press required new ways of thinking about copyright and the ownership of ideas, so the online world has produced its own challenges.

The internet is a part of our lives – nearly 90% of adults in the UK are online and 99% of 12-15 year olds.

In many ways it is a powerful force for good. It can forge connections, share knowledge and spread opportunity across the world.

But it can also be used to promote terrorism, undermine civil discourse, spread disinformation, and abuse or bully.

For the most vulnerable in our society, the effects are more acute and sometimes they are tragic.

And the truth is that the more we do online, the less acceptable it is that behaviour which would be controlled in any other environment is not controlled online.

How to preserve a dynamic and innovative internet, while keeping its users safe from serious harm, is one of the great policy challenges of our age.

This White Paper is our response.

So what does it say?

We could have decided to continue as we are – to urge online companies, in louder and louder voices, to do more to tackle the damaging content on their platforms but leave it to them to decide what should be done and when.

Or we could pursue a prescriptive system of rules-based regulations that would struggle to keep up with a fast-changing threat landscape.

We have concluded that neither of these approaches would deliver the better, safer internet which is in the interests of both those who provide online services and those use them.

So we have set out in this White Paper a different approach.

We propose a duty of care for those online companies which allow users to

share or discover user-generated content, or that allow users to interact with each other online.

A duty to do all that is reasonable to keep their users safe online.

That duty will be enforced by an independent regulator.

The White Paper sets out in greater detail our expectations of online companies as to how they should meet that duty of care and we expect the regulator to reflect those expectations in new codes of practice it will develop.

The regulator will also take account of the need to promote innovation and freedom of speech.

It will adopt a risk-based approach, prioritising action where there is the greatest evidence of threat or harm to individuals or to wider society.

It will also adopt a proportionate approach – taking account of a company's size and resources.

It will be regulation designed to be intelligent, but most of all designed to be effective.

The regulator will have powers to demand transparency from online companies about the harms found on their platforms and what they are doing about them.

And the regulator will have powers to impose meaningful sanctions.

We are consulting in the White Paper not just on remedial notices and substantial fines, but also on senior management liability and the blocking of websites.

But this will be a regulatory approach designed to encourage good behaviour as well as to punish bad behaviour.

Just as technology has created the challenges we are addressing here, technology will provide many of the solutions and the regulator will have broader responsibilities to promote the development and adoption of these technologies and to encourage safety by design.

It is also important to recognise that we all need the skills to keep ourselves safe online and we will task the regulator with promoting those skills too.

So we are proposing some significant changes and we believe they are necessary.

I want to take the opportunity to thank the team of civil servants from my Department and the Home Office, and others across Government for the huge amount of hard work that has gone into producing this White Paper today.

And I want to thank those of you here this morning who have campaigned for a

safer internet, who already do so much to keep people safe online and who have added so much to our thinking on this subject.

We hope you will continue to add to that thinking.

We want you to tell us what you think of what you read in this White Paper, so we can get it right.

CONCLUSION

The last thing I want to say is this.

There are those who say, and will say when they read this White Paper, that because the internet is global, no nation can act to regulate it unless every nation acts to regulate it.

I don't agree.

I believe the United Kingdom can and should lead the world on this. Because the world knows we believe in innovation and we believe in the rule of law too. We are well placed to act first and to develop a system of regulation the world will want to emulate.

This White Paper begins that process, and I am grateful for the strong support in its development of my friend and colleague the Home Secretary, to whom it is my pleasure to hand over to now.

[Press release: HS2 encourages the next generation of engineers](#)

Schools in the vicinity of the HS2 route, which extends from London in the South to Leeds and Manchester in the North, are among those taking part in a programme of innovative workshops aimed at inspiring the next generation to meet the UK's growing engineering skills gap.

Education

HS2 Ltd's education ambassadors are working with pupils, ahead of the choices they will make over whether college, work or university is the right path to take, knowing that today's teenagers are the ones that could be driving the high-speed trains of the future, or helping to deliver HS2 as it extends from the Midlands to the North.

Kate Myers, HS2 Ltd's Head of Skills, Employment and Education, said:

A project the size and scale of HS2 opens up an incredible array of jobs and opportunities and it's important that young people in the local area understand how they can get involved, ahead of making critical choices about their future.

HS2 is much more than just a railway and offers career pathways in a whole range of fields from archaeology and geology to engineering and the environment. We have a responsibility to ensure that young people understand how they can get involved in this transformational project, whether through work experience, apprenticeship opportunities or understanding the qualifications they will need to set them on the path for an amazing career in the future.

Secondary schools and colleges in London, Birmingham and Aylesbury are among those who have taken part in the curriculum-linked workshops, which allow pupils to explore a whole range of topics, from the challenges of constructing major infrastructure components, like viaducts and tunnels, to designing new railway stations capable of meeting the demands of modern day passengers.

STEAM

The STEAM-based (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) workshops help pupils to identify their strengths and skill-sets and understand how they align to the jobs and career opportunities which HS2 is creating now and into the 2030s.

Stefanie, a teacher at St Paul's Girls School in Birmingham, said:

The HS2 workshop was brilliant and really engaged all the students. We would love to do it again, it's one of the best workshops we've had!

Sylvia from Waddesdon School, Aylesbury, said:

The workshop was packed with a range of activities which meant the students were engaged at all times. The focus on careers and skills needed for STEM subjects was very timely as our students pick their GCSE options next month. I would thoroughly recommend the day, and especially your tutor, Jack, to other schools.

Over 30,000 people will play a role in delivering Britain's new high speed railway, and HS2 is investing in young people now to leave a lasting legacy for the future.