

# Press release: UK aid helps stop 750 pieces of illegal ivory being smuggled from South Sudan into Uganda

Thanks to scanners funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), the Ugandan Revenue Authority has made one of the largest seizures of wildlife contraband the country has ever seen.

Customs officers in the Northern Ugandan town of Elegu, on the border with South Sudan, seized an estimated 750 pieces of ivory and thousands of pangolin scales, which have a street value of more than £6 million. This enabled a security operation culminating in the arrest of two suspected Vietnamese smugglers.

The scanners – funded through UK aid and Trade Mark East Africa – uncovered three containers holding the illegal wildlife goods, which the Ugandan Tax Authority estimates killed at least 325 elephants, and thousands of pangolins.

The technology, known as ‘mobile non-intrusive inspection scanners’, were able to show how logs had been hollowed out and filled with the illegal wildlife goods. The smugglers poured wax inside to make the logs appear hollow and resealed them.

The scanners act like x-rays and mean that customs officers don’t physically have to open up vehicles to search inside. Aside from tackling the illegal wildlife trade they can also help stop other illicit items from crossing borders.

Harriett Baldwin, Minister of State for Africa said:

“This seizure is another example of how UK aid is helping countries to crack down on the illegal ivory trade.”

“Wildlife crime robs communities of their natural resources and livelihoods while deepening poverty and inequality. The UK Government will continue working with our African partners to tackle the underlying issues driving this trade.”

Elephants are one of the most poached mammals for their tusks, but Pangolins (Olugave) are even more sort after for their scales which hold medicinal value in parts of Asia.

The illegal wildlife trade (IWT) presents a persistent problem across Africa with an estimated 100,000 pangolins trafficked from Africa to Asia every year and Tanzania losing 60% of its elephants in half a decade. IWT negatively impacts state revenue, economies, and local communities with more than £70bn per year lost due to crimes affecting natural resources. It is one of the most lucrative forms of trafficking along with drugs and weapons.

By working with affected governments wildlife can be used as an engine for tourism, job creation and sustainable development. DFID is helping to tackle the underlying issues driving the trade. Last October we announced £6 million to protect iconic and endangered species including rhinos, elephants and pangolins. We are also introducing innovative new farming techniques and climate-smart crops which provide far more yield – providing sustainable, more lucrative alternatives to poaching.

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## [Press release: Organised crime update: Dangerous Diazepam diversion down by 73%](#)



The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has issued a February update into the diversion of medicines from the legal supply chain into the criminal market. Recent figures into bulk orders of diverted medicines between January 2016 compared to March 2017 figures show:

- trading of Diazepam is down by 73%
- trading of Nitrazepam is down by 30%
- trading of top strength Temazepam is down by 18%
- trading of Zolpidem is down by 18%.

The update into the diversion of medicines from the legal supply chain into the criminal market also revealed as of February 2019:

- 32 investigations have been initiated
- 86 suspects have been either arrested or interviewed under caution and there have been criminal convictions
- 13 wholesale dealers have had their licenses discontinued or terminated and the General Pharmaceutical Council have suspended 8 pharmacists.

[In 2016](#), MHRA launched a major investigation into the diversion of medicines from the legal supply chain, [estimated to be worth up to £200m](#). MHRA investigators have been tirelessly working to identify those responsible and reduce the diversion of medicines ever since.

Alastair Jeffrey, MHRA Head of Enforcement said:

Selling medicines outside of the supply chain is a serious criminal offence and the latest figures and the reduction in diversion shows our determination to protect public health.

The expansion of our operation shows we will continue to track down and prosecute those recklessly endangering public safety by illegally selling prescription medicines.

Those involved have no concern about your health and are making money from vulnerable people.

Please speak to a GP or healthcare professional if you have any questions or concerns about prescription only medicines.

Visit <http://www.gov.uk/fakemedes> for tips on buying medicines safely online and how to avoid unscrupulous sites. You may also provide information anonymously through [Crimestoppers](#)

[Diversion of Meds video](#)

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## **[Press release: Strengthened protection for Essex and Suffolk countryside](#)**

- Proposals to extend Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Parts of Essex to be recognised for its natural beauty for the first time
- Public invited to have a say on new protections

Parts of Essex and new parts of Suffolk could be recognised as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) for the first time under plans outlined today.

[Natural England](#) has put forward proposals to extend the [Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB](#), the first extension since it was designated in 1970.

The move would see approximately 15 square miles brought within the protected area, including the Stour Estuary, Samford Valley and Freston Brook Valley, increasing the AONB by nearly 10% – a size equivalent to 3,800 international rugby pitches.

The UK's 46 AONBs represent some of country's finest countryside, spanning from Cornwall to the North Pennines, offering a wealth of opportunities for both people and wildlife to benefit from the countryside.

Interim Chief Executive of Natural England Marian Spain said:

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty represent some of the country's most valued landscapes, designated to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

The extension of Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB would ensure magnificent estuary, valley and woodland views in this part of Suffolk and Essex are given added protection. The support and input from the public and stakeholders has been vital in developing these plans, and we look forward to working closely together as we hopefully see them become a reality.

Included in the proposed extension are:

- The Stour Estuary including much of the estuary itself, the northern estuary valley slopes at Brantham and the majority of the southern estuary valley slopes between Mistley and Parkeston
- The Samford Valley, a tributary of the Stour Estuary, which extends further inland from the existing AONB boundary at Stutton Bridge and includes some areas of neighbouring Shotley Peninsula Plateau; and
- The Freston Brook Valley, a tributary of the Orwell Estuary which extends inland from the existing AONB boundary westwards and includes surrounding plateau woodlands. The move would bring significant benefits to the local area, enabling local businesses and tourist sites to promote the area as an AONB and access relevant grants.

The proposals come as Julian Glover leads the government's ongoing [review into protected landscapes](#), the first evaluation in 70 years of whether England's National Parks and AONBs meet the nation's needs in the 21st century and whether there is scope for the current network to expand.

The designation would also complement existing wildlife management measures in the area, with the Stour Estuary designated as a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) and a special area of conservation (SAC).

Copies of the draft order to designate these areas, including maps of the areas affected, have been made available for public inspection locally. A notice period will run from 12 February 2019 to 22 March 2019 where the public can respond to proposals, before the designation can be formally confirmed, amended or rejected by Environment Secretary Michael Gove.

About the designation:

Natural England has a power under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 to designate land as an AONB if it meets the statutory designation criterion of outstanding natural beauty.

A comprehensive consultation process ran for a three month period from 26 January to 20 April 2018. The statutory consultees are local authorities with land in the proposed extensions and those with land in the existing SC&H AONB. In line with good practice, Natural England decided to widen the consultation to engage with stakeholders and the wider public.

During the Notice Period, copies of the draft Order will be available for public inspection for 28 working days between 9.30 and 16.30 Mondays to Fridays: in the following locations:

- Natural England offices in Cambridge and Norwich,
- Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty office
- Manningtree, Harwich, Ipswich and Capel St Mary libraries (see their websites for opening hours).
- The documents are also available for [download online](#)

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## [Press release: North East man fined for permit breach](#)

A Teesside man has been fined hundreds of pounds and ordered to pay thousands of pounds in costs after breaching an environmental permit and then failing to comply with an enforcement notice in Middlesbrough.

Fazel Hussain, 52, of Yarm Road in Stockton-on-Tees, appeared at Teesside Magistrates' Court on Monday 11 February where he pleaded guilty to both offences.

He was charged with breaching his permit for M&M Autos at Snowdon Road in Middlesbrough, and failing to comply with an enforcement notice to make improvements to the site.

He was fined £800, ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £80 and costs of £5,000.

Matthew Treece, prosecuting on behalf of the Environment Agency, told the court that Environment Agency officers visited the site – which was a mechanic business which also dealt with scrap vehicles and oil contaminated vehicles parts – on 9 March 2017.

### **Number of issues at the site**

They noticed a number of issues at the site, including: a damaged concrete surface and no containment bund, meaning any fluids from end of life vehicles would run from the site on to the road outside, there was no drainage system, and batteries and waste oil were being stored inappropriately.

There was evidence of recent and long term oil spills which hadn't been cleaned up.

The Environment Agency sent a report of their visit to Hussain, telling him what action needed to be carried out to bring the site back into compliance. There were seven actions to complete by April 2017.

On 5 May, 2017, the Environment Agency returned to the site, meeting with Hussain and another man who was managing the site on his behalf. The various improvements had not been completed.

A month later an Enforcement Notice was served with three requirements – namely to appoint a Technically Competent Manager by 1 July, repair the impermeable concrete surface and create a bund, and install a sealed drainage system, both by 30 November, 2017.

On 4 December 2017 the Environment Agency visited the site again to find the issues had still not been rectified. There was again evidence of oil spillages that has not been cleaned up.

### **Important that sites abide by permit conditions**

Paul Whitehill, Enforcement Team Leader for the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

Environmental permits are in place to protect the environment and our communities, and Hussain showed repeated offending over an extended period of time.

It's important those processing scrap vehicles abide by the permit conditions to ensure oil and other harmful substances don't enter into the ground, impacting on the environment, and includes the need for specific storage and disposal of fluids.

We hope this sends out the message to others that we take permit breaches seriously and will take the appropriate action.

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## **[Press release: New Charity Inquiry: Birmingham Diocesan Trust](#)**

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has opened a statutory inquiry into The Birmingham Diocesan Trust ([234216](#)). The inquiry is focused on the charity's safeguarding governance and the adequacy of its response to recent reviews. The inquiry was opened on 21 December 2018.

The charity's objects include the provision of religious services and education across Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Oxfordshire, Sandwell, Solihull, Staffordshire, Walsall, Warwickshire and Wolverhampton.

In February 2018 the charity notified the Commission that the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) had selected them as a case study and had listed a hearing into historic safeguarding issues at the charity for November 2018.

During the summer of 2018, as part of the charity's preparation for the hearing it proactively commissioned a number of reviews of its safeguarding policies, procedures and practices. In late October and November the charity provided the Commission with copies of the results of these independent audit reviews, which highlighted some serious failings and concerns over how the charity was handling safeguarding matters.

The Commission's role includes holding charities to account for their actions and/or inactions. The Commission requested further information from the charity via its solicitors about its response to the results of the reviews, to assess its management of any live risks, if the charity had adequate procedures on safeguarding in place and its response about the areas in need of improvement. The responses supplied during November and December were not sufficiently timely or adequate to satisfy the Commission, given the gravity of the issues raised by the reports nor did it provide adequate reassurance that the key risks were being swiftly and effectively managed.

Part of the charity's response to the review findings was to recruit a new interim head of safeguarding. His first report, three weeks in, emphasised the need to address the governance failures and ensure that the charity was taking sufficiently timely action and applying sufficient resource to respond to the concerns.

As a result, the Commission opened a statutory inquiry to examine and provide assurance about the charity's governance, operational management and its policies and practices with regard to safeguarding and people protection issues, particularly in relation to:

- Its risk management procedures, and handling of incidents reported since 2016
- Its responsibility to provide a safe environment for its beneficiaries, staff and other charity workers
- Vetting and following of DBS procedures in relation to its employees, volunteers and other charity workers
- Its response to and actions in relation to the audit report review
- Sufficient steps are being taken to ensure public trust and confidence in the charity.

Safeguarding procedures in the schools that come under the oversight of the diocese are not, at this time, within the scope of the inquiry.

## **Harvey Grenville, Head of Investigations and Enforcement said:**

The public rightly expect charities to ensure safeguarding is an absolute priority, so when anyone comes into contact with people representing a charity, they are protected and the risks managed.

The Birmingham Diocesan Trust is a large charity, providing services accessed weekly by some 60,000 people and has a wide scope; it works across many different regions and has a wide range of beneficiaries. The beneficiaries quite rightly expect to be confident and assured that the charity's safeguarding governance is fit for purpose, and any areas identified for improvement are swiftly and properly addressed.

We have opened a statutory inquiry into the charity to ensure it addresses these specific concerns as a matter of urgency. We are in liaison with, and working with the relevant statutory agencies to, ensure that any safeguarding risks are being managed appropriately.

After the opening of the inquiry, the Commission immediately met with the trustees. They are fully cooperating with the inquiry, and have confirmed that they are committed to resolving matters as soon as possible. They have taken some further actions to respond to the reports issues, including the appointment of two additional assistant safeguarding coordinators, a reorganisation of how safeguarding matters are reported to the trustees and the commissioning of external consultants to work with statutory agencies to ensure all live safeguarding risks are being managed appropriately. These will be relevant when considering our next regulatory steps.

Anyone who wishes to discuss safeguarding and the Archdiocese's work can contact the charity on 0121 230 6240. Alternatively, to contact the National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC), the number is 0808 801 0331 or the IICSA Truth Project can be contacted via its website [www.truthproject.org.uk](http://www.truthproject.org.uk) to discuss historic issues. For current safeguarding concerns that are of a criminal nature please contact your local police force on 101.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were. Reports of previous inquiries by the Commission are available on [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK).

Ends

## **Notes to Editors**

1. The Charity Commission is the regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work see the [about us](#) page on GOV.UK.
2. Search for charities on our [check charity](#) tool.



3. Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to institute inquiries. The opening of an inquiry gives the Commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers. The Commission is not a statutory safeguarding agency. Further information on the Commission's remit in relation to safeguarding can be found in our [guidance](#).