

Press release: Violent Birmingham carjackers jailed for longer

A gang of carjackers have had their sentences increased after the Solicitor General, Robert Buckland QC MP, referred their case to the Court of Appeal.

Sarweeth Rehman, Hussun Ashraf and Adal Azam, all 22, carried out a string of thefts in which vehicles were towed away using a pick-up truck.

Their offending escalated when they attempted to steal 2 cars by smashing a car window with a hammer while the driver was still inside, and threatening another driver with a metal bar.

Rehman and Ashraf were further convicted of offences which took place on 24 August 2017, when Rehman threatened a man and smashed up his car. Later that same day Rehman and Ashraf dragged a woman from her car before stealing it. Further incidents occurred over the following months.

Rehman, Ashraf and Azam were originally sentenced in October at Birmingham Crown Court. Rehman was sentenced to 5 years and 9 months in prison, Ashraf to 6 years 4 months in prison, and Azam to 3 years and 10 months in prison.

The Court of Appeal has today increased Rehman's sentence to 10 years in prison plus activation of 2 suspended sentences amounting to 34 weeks imprisonment to be served consecutively, Ashraf's to 11 and a half years in prison plus activation of one suspended sentence of 16 weeks imprisonment to be served consecutively, and Azam's to 6 years in prison.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General said:

These men carried out a series of violent attacks, striking when the victims were alone and then making off with their cars. The Court's decision to increase their sentences now reflects the severity of their crimes.

News story: Avian flu: advice for travellers over Chinese New Year

The Chinese Lunar New Year or Spring Festival begins on Tuesday 5 February 2019, and marks the start of the Year of the Pig. The celebrations end with the Lantern Festival on the 19 February 2019.

Human cases of avian influenza have recently been reported in China, and historically there have been more cases at this time of year. Cases have originated from several provinces and municipalities across Mainland China, and there have been a small numbers of cases among Hong Kong SAR and Taiwan residents who have travelled to mainland China.

The majority of reported human cases in China have had close contact with wild birds or poultry. Although the risk is very low, Public Health England (PHE) and the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) are reminding UK travellers to protect themselves from avian flu by minimising exposure to wild birds and poultry.

Dr Dipti Patel, Director at NaTHNaC, said:

Although the risk to UK residents travelling to the affected areas remains very low, anyone planning to visit China, Hong Kong SAR or Taiwan should minimise their exposure to any birds such as wild birds or at live poultry markets, as a precaution.

We also strongly recommend that people see their GP, pharmacist or travel health clinic ideally 4 to 6 weeks before travel, to check they are in-date with any recommended vaccinations and discuss any other potential health risks.

Dr Gavin Dabrera, PHE's avian flu expert, explained:

People can develop avian flu following close contact with poultry or other birds that are infected with the virus. We strongly urge people travelling to China to avoid visiting live bird and animal markets (including 'wet' markets) and poultry farms, avoid touching dead or dying birds and maintain good hand and personal hygiene.

If travellers experience flu-like illness within 10 days of returning from China, they should call their GP or NHS 111 and report their recent travel.

While the risk to the UK from avian flu is currently seen as being very low, PHE has arrangements in place to deal with emerging diseases. This includes the detection and investigation of suspected cases, and the management of confirmed cases and their contacts.

Travellers can check [NaTHNaC's TravelHealthPro](#) website for current travel health recommendations for:

PHE has produced [clinical guidance for health professionals in England](#) on the assessment and investigation of patients with severe flu-like illness who have recently returned from China.

PHE has also published [official prevention advice for travellers in English and Chinese](#).

News story: No deal Brexit advice: Changes for timber importers and exporters

Timber importers and exporters are being asked to consider requirements for their businesses in the event of a no deal Brexit.

Delivering a deal with the EU remains the Government's top priority. This has not changed. However, the Government must prepare for every eventuality, including a no deal scenario.

In a no deal scenario, businesses importing timber and timber products from the European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) and placing it on the UK market will have to carry out checks (known as 'due diligence') from day one of EU Exit. These checks demonstrate they are importing legally harvested timber, helping to protect against illegal deforestation.

Due diligence checks would involve:

- Gathering information on the timber, including its species, quantity, supplier, country of harvest and compliance with applicable legislation;
- Assessing the risk of timber being illegal, applying set criteria in the regulations; and
- Obtaining additional information or taking further steps to verify legality (for example testing or assessment of the supply chain).

Businesses can either develop their own systems for these checks or use one provided by an approved monitoring organisation. This is what businesses currently have to do when they import timber from the rest of the world.

There will be no changes to the current process for businesses importing from outside the EU, UK producers first placing on the market, and internal UK trade. As before, they will need to conduct checks to confirm their timber is legally harvested.

[The Office for Product Safety and Standards \(OPSS\)](#) – the body responsible for enforcement – has been working with companies involved in the timber trade to

keep them informed about what they will need to do in a no deal scenario and how to minimise impacts to their business.

Further guidance is available [here](#).

Press release: Strengthened protection for Poole Harbour's unique range of wildlife

One of the country's best-loved coasts will be better protected following the expansion of a major wildlife protection area in Dorset.

[Natural England](#) has confirmed the extension of the [Poole Harbour Site of Special Scientific Interest \(SSSI\)](#). The move will see a further 1,800 hectares (ha) of land and sea brought within the site to help protect the entire harbour – an increase of 40 per cent. It is the first SSSI specifically to include subtidal areas, which will protect the feeding areas of internationally important tern populations.

The beautiful Poole Harbour is a magnet for both people and wildlife.

Environment Secretary, Michael Gove said:

Part of Thomas Hardy's Wessex landscape, this protection of a large part of Poole Harbour will continue to ensure that generations to come can enjoy the Dorset coast. Through this action, Natural England is making a vital contribution to our nation's cultural and environmental heritage.

Our 25 Year Environment Plan includes a commitment to develop a Nature Recovery Network to protect and restore wildlife. Improving our protected areas will play an important role as we develop this network and work to realise our ambition to become the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.

This SSSI extension connects to a wide network of important habitats. The Dorset Heaths are one of the best examples of lowland heath in the world and Poole Harbour opens out onto outstanding marine habitat protected under the Bluebelt programme, including [Poole Rocks Marine Conservation Zone \(MCZ\)](#), and Studland Bay proposed MCZ.

Key to the success of such large scale environmental improvement has been Natural England working with local harbour users and partners such as the

[Southern Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority](#), [Poole Harbour Commissioners](#), [Royal Society for the Protection of Birds \(RSPB\)](#), [National Trust](#), [Dorset Wildlife Trust](#), [Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#) and local authorities .

Natural England's Interim Chief Executive, Marian Spain, said:

Natural England is here to make sure that people and nature can thrive, through sustainable stewardship of the land and sea. I am delighted therefore that we have been able to extend the protection for this internationally important site. Poole Harbour is one of the very few SSSIs to include important subtidal habitat, home to an abundance of species including dense forests of Peacock Worms.

The support from our partners and stakeholders across the area has been vital to our work and we look forward to continuing to work with them so that Poole Harbour can continue to be enjoyed and cared for by everyone long into the future.

Dr Jane Goodall DBE, Bournemouth resident and founder of the [Jane Goodall Institute](#) and UN Messenger of Peace said:

I am delighted to learn that there has been a significant expansion of the wildlife protection designation which will help to safeguard the future health and resilience of Poole Harbour.

Protecting land and seas for future generations and for the welfare of all creatures depending on those areas is so important. I commend all involved for taking these steps to protect our precious environment for all.

A beloved habitat

Central to the area's popularity is its unique natural environment, one which is loved locally and celebrated nationally and internationally. Fringing its shores are extensive saltmarshes and mudflats – these habitats provide vital feeding and breeding opportunities for the numerous rare and endangered bird species (eg, avocet, spoonbill & black-tailed godwit) for which the harbour is renowned.

These habitats also play an important role in providing tourism and recreational benefits, supporting a thriving commercial shellfish fishery and offering natural flood defence and cleaner water.

Below the waves, seagrass beds flourish in the shallows while the channels hide the spectacular peacock worm and a rich variety of other marine species including sponges, sea squirts and tube worms.

This designation will complement the existing management measures, including

the newly extended Poole Harbour Special Protection Area that was announced last year, to deliver a management framework for all stakeholders.

Further reaction from conservationists

Conservation organisations working in the harbour area are supportive of the move to expand the protections for this important habitat.

Paul Morton, co-founder of the charity 'Birds of Poole Harbour said:

The SSSI extension follows the recent SPA review and is in recognition of the importance the whole harbour has to waders and wildfowl. Natural England deserve a huge well done for bringing this together, as do all the organisations that helped collate the relevant data.

Emma Rance, marine conservation officer at Dorset Wildlife Trust said:

The channels beneath the busy waterways of Poole Harbour are home to a myriad of species. Supporting habitats such as seagrass beds provide refuge for juvenile fish and shellfish which become a rich food source for overwintering and roosting seabirds. We very much welcome the SSSI extension to further enhance the conservation value of our highly prized harbour.

Andy Smith, Natural England's Area Manager for Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight said:

Poole Harbour is a special place. This extension of the area's protection is about supporting sustainable social and economic development in a way the benefits and enhances the natural environment. By identifying, designating and managing important species and habitats, we can ensure development compliments and supports these local features.

While Natural England has led on this new designation, this achievement is thanks to the hard work and support of many key Poole Harbour conservation organisations. This strong partnership has been developed and will continue in the coming months to ensure the opportunities associated with this new protection are fully realised.

News story: First ever cross-government suicide prevention plan published

The government has published the first [cross-government suicide prevention plan](#). The plan has a focus on how social media and the latest technology – such as predictive analytics and artificial intelligence – can identify those at risk of suicide.

The plan will be led by the Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Jackie Doyle-Price. It sets out actions for local government, the NHS and the criminal justice system.

The plan commits the government to improving data held on causes of death among veterans to better understand the triggers that can lead someone to take their own life, such as debt and gambling addiction.

It also includes greater focus on addressing the increase in suicide and self-harm among young people, while social media companies will be asked to take more responsibility for online content that promotes methods of suicide and self-harm.

Other parts of the plan include:

- every local authority putting an effective suicide prevention plan in place
- ensuring every mental health trust has a zero-suicide ambition plan for mental health inpatients by the end of 2019
- every prison putting actions in place to reduce suicides and self-harm and improve staff awareness and training
- addressing the specific needs of the highest risk groups, including middle-aged men, with £25 million funding
- improving research on things that can be linked to suicide, such as debt and gambling addiction

There are 4,500 suicides each year in England, and around 13 people end their life every day. Men are 3 times more likely to die by suicide than women, and suicide is the leading cause of death in men under 50. Suicide is also a leading cause of death in young people.

The Prime Minister appointed Jackie Doyle-Price as the UK's first Suicide Prevention Minister in October 2018. Part of her role is to work across local and national government to carry out the [national suicide prevention strategy](#), published in 2012.

The cross-government suicide prevention plan published in January 2019 supports the national suicide prevention strategy, following recommendations from the Health Select Committee's inquiry into suicide prevention in 2016.

Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Jackie Doyle-Price said:

As a society we need to do everything we can to support vulnerable and at-risk people, as well as those in crisis, and give them the help they desperately need.

I will be working with local councils, the NHS and the justice system to make sure suicide prevention plans are put in place across public services.

Together, we will do everything in our power to meet our ambition to reduce suicides by at least 10% by 2020 – and I look forward to working collaboratively with social media and tech companies to help achieve our ambitions.

Samaritans CEO Ruth Sutherland said:

We welcome the publication of the workplan and hope it will help save more lives.

Every 6 seconds someone contacts Samaritans volunteers for support, so we know that there is a huge amount to be done to help those struggling to cope.

When we can work in partnership, we can make a bigger impact in preventing suicide, particularly among the hardest to reach high-risk groups such as low-income and middle-aged men, and those whose occupation puts them at higher risk. Working to address inequalities in suicide is key.

We also need more research into the increases in self-harm and suicide among young people, and why gambling addiction and debt can drive suicides. Improving suicide data is essential to help us put more effective suicide prevention in place.