

Lasting Power of Attorney revamp to improve safety and efficiency

- New safeguards to protect against fraud and abuse
- Process to be made simpler, quicker and easy to use
- New digital service to reduce application errors and speed up registrations

Ministers have set out plans to transform the lasting power of attorney (LPA) system – making it quicker to use, easier to access and even more secure from fraud.

Under the proposals, people will be able to make an LPA completely online for the first time – bringing it in line with other government services such as applying for a divorce. The current paper-based system will continue to operate meaning people can choose an accessible process that's best for their specific needs.

Crucially, the reforms will bolster safeguards to protect vulnerable people from abuse or fraud. The plans include new identification checks which would require official documents or information such as a driving licence, passport or Government Gateway account as part of a strengthened verification process.

The number of registered LPAs has increased drastically in recent years to more than 6 million, but the process of making one retains many paper-based features that are over 30 years old.

Today's announcement follows a government consultation which sought views on modernising the system. The proposals have been developed following engagement with a wide range of stakeholders such as Age UK, the Law Society, and the National Mental Capacity Forum, to ensure that they work for those who rely on LPAs to manage their affairs in later life.

Justice Minister, Tom Pursglove MP, said:

A lasting power of attorney provides comfort and reassurance to millions of people that decisions will be made in their best interests should they lose capacity.

Our reforms will make the system easier to access, simpler and even more secure from fraud. This forms part of our plans to harness technology across government and provide better services to the public.

An LPA is a legal document which allows people (a donor) to appoint someone else (an attorney) to make decisions about their welfare, money, or property. It's an important tool that allows people to choose someone they know and

trust to make decisions for them were they to lose capacity in future. They are often used by older people but can be made by anyone over the age of 18.

The service is operated by the Office of the Public Guardian and currently handles more than 19 million pieces of paper annually. The introduction of a new digital process will improve the efficiency and sustainability of the organisation and reduce its carbon footprint.

Digitisation will also help reduce errors from donors, attorneys and others involved in the process by ensuring these can be picked up and fixed early on – ultimately helping to slash waiting times.

Stuart Howard, Interim Public Guardian for England and Wales, said:

Lasting powers of attorney are vital in helping people plan for the future and stay in control of their decisions.

These reforms will enable us to modernise the process – ensuring our service is fit for the future, safe and simple to use, and can be accessed online.

The government has also committed to looking further into how the new digital system could improve the witnessing process and make it simpler. It would give donors more time to focus on the important decisions in the process such as who they are giving powers to and the scope of those powers.

Notes to editors

Chancellor sets out further economic support for Ukraine at G7 meeting in Bonn

- Rishi Sunak also discussed how global partners can continue to work together to soften the war's impact on the global economy
- He will also urge G7 counterparts to maintain momentum behind and deliver the historic agreement on global tax reform – ensuring companies pay their fair share of tax in the countries in which they operate

The Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak confirms that the UK stands ready to guarantee up to \$50 million for further financing to Ukraine, to help

ensure the continued provision of electricity to its citizens.

The Chancellor attended meetings with G7 partners today and will continue to do so tomorrow, alongside the Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey. They discussed efforts to support Ukraine and the ways in which the war is adding to pressures on the global economy, including impacts on the cost of living in the UK.

Today, Rishi Sunak announced the UK's commitment to guarantee \$50million, of further financing to Ukraine from the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, which is headquartered in London. This comes on top of the \$950m in loan guarantees that the UK has already committed to significantly scale up World Bank lending to the Government of Ukraine to help meet urgent fiscal needs.

This guarantee will be used by the EBRD to provide further financing to the Ukrainian electricity grid operator, Ukrenergo to support continued provision of electricity to the brave Ukrainian people, subject to approval by Parliament.

This funding forms part of the significant economic, humanitarian and military support the UK has committed to Ukraine, totalling well over \$3 billion.

The Chancellor also discussed the shared challenges facing the global economy, including the rising cost of living globally, and the acute challenges faced by developing economies including heightened food insecurity.

He pushed his partners in the G7 to ensure that the sanctions announced so far are being urgently implemented and strongly enforced to exert maximum cost on Putin and his regime.

Ahead of the meetings, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak said:

I remain steadfast with my G7 partners in standing with Ukraine. I am pleased to confirm up to \$50million in UK guarantees for EBRD critical support in Ukraine. This will help Ukraine continue to provide electricity to its citizens as they fight for their freedom.

It's clear that Putin's barbaric and illegal invasion of Ukraine has not only had a devastating humanitarian impact on Ukraine; it is also causing significant disruption to the global economy, the impacts of which are being felt across the G7, including here at home in the UK.

I am determined to work with my G7 partners to confront these shared challenges.

Tomorrow, the Chancellor will also call for progress on the implementation of

the international tax agreement that was struck last year during the UK's presidency of the G7. This historic global tax reform will ensure companies pay their fair share of tax in the countries in which they operate. In Bonn, the Chancellor will encourage his partners to maintain momentum and collaborate to deliver on the agreement as swiftly as possible.

Further information

- Whilst in Bonn for the G7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting, the Chancellor will meet with his partners for working sessions over today and tomorrow and will have bilats with some of the attending finance ministers.
- The UK's combined economic, humanitarian and military package of support, totalling over \$3 billion comprises:
 - i) around \$500 million in economic and humanitarian grant support for Ukraine. This comprises: a £220 million (c.\$290m) package of humanitarian aid, making the UK a leading bilateral humanitarian donor; a c.£75m (\$100m) fiscal support grant, channelled through the World Bank Trust Fund; a £100 million (c.\$130m) grant to support Ukraine's energy security and reforms,
 - ii) Almost \$1 billion in guarantees on World Bank lending to Ukraine, unlocking additional WB financing on a 1:1 basis over the coming months. These financial guarantees are subject to parliamentary approval.
 - iii) \$50 million in potential guarantees on lending to Ukraine by the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). This will be used to guarantee \$100 million of EBRD lending to Ukrenergo. This guarantee is subject to parliamentary approval.
 - iv) Over \$1.5 billion in military aid, including thousands of anti-tank weapons
- The G7 is also expected to discuss international solutions to combat carbon leakage and financing for pandemic preparedness.

[Report by OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media: UK response, May](#)

2022

Thank you Mr Chair, I wish to thank the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM), dear Teresa Ribeiro, for your report.

The report had a necessary and justified focus on the impact of Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. It was another stark reminder of what has been happening over the last 85 days.

It reminded us of the journalists that have been killed in Russia's premeditated and unjustified war. Like the RFOM, we offer our heartfelt condolences to their family and friends.

We are also reminded of the reports of the disappearance, detention and abduction of Ukrainian journalists or their relatives by the Russian military. We recall, with horror, the reported case of the Ukrainian interpreter and fixer for Radio France left in an icy cellar, repeatedly beaten with an iron bar and rifle butts, tortured with electricity, deprived of food for 48 hours and subjected to mock execution.

The three eminent independent experts who authored the recent ["Moscow Mechanism" report](#) referenced that case when noting they had "received several credible reports according to which Russian forces arrested civilians, including journalists, without any procedure, and ill-treated them by methods that amount to torture." The experts' conclusion? That "this constitutes a war crime."

We are also reminded of the case of Vladyslav, a freelance journalist sentenced to six years in prison on politically motivated charges, who is reported to have been mistreated and abused while in prison. Yesterday, the RFoM highlighted the abduction of Oleksii Vorontsov, engineer of public broadcaster UA:Kherston, and, rightly, called for his immediate release.

Mr Chair, the RFOM's report today also highlights that inside the Russian Federation we are seeing "the most severe crackdown on free speech and media freedom of the last 25 years." The impact of this crackdown is also felt in the temporarily Russian controlled territories of Ukraine, including illegally annexed Crimea, where Ukrainians are subject to the ever-increasing restrictions on media freedom imposed through Russia's legislation. The actions of the Russian Government are at odds with their obligations under international law and their OSCE commitments. They are at odds with a proper functioning democracy. OSCE participating States agreed in Budapest in 1994 that "freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and a basic component of a democratic society". People must be allowed to discuss and debate issues freely, to challenge their governments, and to make informed political decisions. The media crackdown in Russia, as described by the RFOM in her report, means that such a free and informed debate is simply not happening in Russia.

Mr Chair, I was not surprised that, just before my intervention, Russia that

criticised the RFoM's work and her report. That's because they know, in their heart of hearts, as we do, that facts matter. And that in protecting and supporting freedom of expression and media freedom, the RFoM helps defend and promote facts. This is in stark contrast to the Russian Government and their approach of misinformation and disinformation.

We also note the RFoM's comment that "the dreadful freedom of expression and media freedom situation in Belarus again warrants separate mentioning". Like the RFoM we remain worried that journalists are being sentenced, arrested or detained for simply doing their work. And that "the practice of continued arrests and convictions of journalists on trumped-up charges is a grave danger to media freedom in the country". The actions of the Lukashenko regime are not compatible with Belarus' international obligations and OSCE commitments on freedom of expression and media freedom.

The RFoM's report highlights the importance of freedom of expression and media freedom to the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. We believe the slogan to commemorate 25 years of the RFoM – "no security without media freedom" – is particularly apt at this time of crisis in the OSCE region. Promoting media freedom across the whole OSCE region is a priority for the UK. That is why we greatly value the RFoM's important work across the whole region, including in the Western Balkans and Central Asia, and on key topics such as the safety of journalists, on restrictive measures at the national level that limit media freedom, and on the dangers of misinformation and disinformation.

Teresa – thank you for your efforts and that of your office. Your work is of the utmost importance as we collectively address the terrible impact of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. The United Kingdom continues to offer our full support for the important work undertaken by you, and your excellent staff.

Thank you Mr Chair

[New grant to boost domestic tree production opens](#)

A new £8.8 million fund to support domestic tree production in England has been opened by the Forestry Commission today (Thursday 19 May), in partnership with Defra.

The funding will help tree nurseries and suppliers invest in projects which improve, expand, automate or mechanise their operations. This will support efforts to build nursery capacity and grow long-term tree seed and sapling supply – delivering on a commitment within the [England Trees Action Plan](#)), the Government's long-term plan for the nation's trees, woodlands and

forests.

Successful projects will be awarded up to £175,000 in grant funding to cover up to 50% of costs, with money coming from the Tree Production Capital Grant as part of the Government's £750 million Nature for Climate Fund. Example projects suitable for funding could include investments in machinery such as transplanting systems and grading machines, improved polytunnel infrastructure and irrigation systems, or in biosecurity through improved water treatment and refrigeration equipment. The grant is open to tree seed and sapling suppliers of all sizes, as well as new entrants looking to diversify into the sector.

Forestry Minister Lord Goldsmith said:

With demand for trees set to grow dramatically over the coming years as we pursue our ambitious tree planting targets, fostering a robust forestry industry is critical.

Supporting the sector with this new funding will safeguard sapling supply chains, create new green jobs and help to realise our long-term vision for our trees and woodlands.

Forestry Commission Chief Executive Richard Stanford said:

The Tree Production Capital Grant will help to build the forestry sector of the future.

As well as increasing the quantity of trees produced domestically, this grant will enhance their diversity so that forests, woodlands and treescapes which are resilient to stresses like pests, diseases and climate change can be grown.

I encourage nurseries of all sizes, as well as organisations in allied sectors looking to diversify into tree seed and sapling production, to apply.

Up to £8.8 million is available through the Tree Production Capital Grant, subject to sufficient high-quality bids being received. The fund will enable suppliers to bolster production at pace and has been designed to complement the [Tree Production Innovation Fund](#), which provides support for research projects that enhance tree production methods.

The Forestry Commission will be hosting a webinar on the new Tree Production Capital Grant on Wednesday 8 June – [sign up here](#).

The Tree Production Capital Grant is now open for applications until Thursday 30 June. For more information and to apply, go to: www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-production-capital-grant

Charity Commission case exposes failures at British Pakistani Christians Limited

The Charity Commission has criticised the trustees of [British Pakistani Christians Limited \(BPCA\)](#) for failing to ensure proper safeguarding measures were in place at the charity, and for their poor oversight of the charity's governance. The regulator has cautioned the trustees to take steps to improve the charity's governance and management.

BPCA has broad charitable objects, and in practice, supports community groups and individuals on issues such as debt, forced marriage and poverty in Redbridge, London and works overseas.

The regulator opened a case into the charity in 2020 after concerns were raised about a safeguarding incident linked to the charity overseas. The Commission investigated the trustees' response to the incident and found failures in its immediate handling as well as a general lack of adequate safeguarding policies and procedures.

The regulator also identified wider governance concerns, including a lack of robust financial controls in relation to its overseas operations and confusion amongst the trustees about the aims and activities of the charity.

In February 2021, the Commission issued the charity with an Official Warning directing its trustees to take action to address these failures.

The Commission recently assessed the charity's progress in addressing the measures set out in the warning, finding improvements around the charity's safeguarding policies, training of trustees and staff and in its overseas operations.

The regulator has now issued further formal advice to the trustees, requiring them to address outstanding concerns around the charity's handling of conflicts of interest. The Commission has now closed its case.

Tracy Howarth, Assistant Director of Casework, said:

Everyone who comes into contact with a charity has a right to feel safe. Trustees must make safeguarding a governance priority, ensuring that the charity protects people from harm, and responds promptly and effectively when things do go wrong. Unfortunately, that hasn't always been the case at BPCA. We found the charity's trustees lacked sufficient oversight and expertise to protect people who came into contact with the charity.

I am pleased that our firm action in this case has resulted in clear improvements in the charity's approach to safeguarding. We now expect the trustees to address outstanding issues, and ensure the charity's governance improves into the future.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.
2. The Charity Commission does not investigate criminal matters, which are for the police and other agencies. The Commission's remit in relation to safeguarding is explained in its [safeguarding strategy](#), published on GOV.UK.