

Supporting holistic efforts to stabilise the Sahel through security, governance, and development

Thank you, President, and thank you to our briefers.

I would like to make three points.

First, the peoples of the Sahel can continue to count on the United Kingdom's steadfast support. The challenges facing the region are complex, interlinked and require holistic solutions. We are working with our partners in the Sahel to foster long-term stability by addressing drivers of conflict, including climate change.

We are also working to protect the most vulnerable in the Sahel from the impacts of the global food crisis caused by Russia's illegal and unjustified aggression against Ukraine. In addition to agreeing unprecedented World Bank financing to protect vulnerable countries from the economic impacts of Russia's invasion, the United Kingdom's previous funding of \$200 million, plus our new humanitarian funding, will help over 300 million people in the region with food assistance.

Secondly, I want to emphasise the importance of ensuring that all actors in the Sahel promote and protect human rights, and comply with international human rights and humanitarian law.

In this respect we remain seriously concerned by the presence of the Wagner Group in Mali. Allegations of human rights violations and abuses have increased significantly since Wagner deployed to Mali in December 2021. Wagner also has a track record of exploiting natural resources and spreading destabilising disinformation.

We urge the Malian authorities to end their relationship with the Wagner Group, in the interests of national and regional stability. The Malian authorities should also allow MINUSMA unfettered access to Moura to conduct a transparent and independent investigation into allegations that Malian troops, operating alongside Wagner mercenaries, massacred civilians in March.

Thirdly, President, lasting peace and stability in the Sahel will depend on good governance, built around the rule of law, accountable and effective state institutions, and development of sustainable livelihoods. We therefore support ECOWAS efforts to encourage timely transitions back to constitutional order in Mali and Burkina Faso. We encourage the transitional authorities in both countries to continue to engage constructively with ECOWAS on timetables for political transition and practical steps to prepare for elections.

In conclusion, President, the United Kingdom is proud to be supporting efforts to stabilise the Sahel, including through our deployment in MINUSMA

and our humanitarian and development partnerships. We remain committed to helping address the Sahel's challenges through a holistic approach incorporating security, governance, and development.

And I thank you, President.

South-East anglers hook benefits from Fisheries Improvement Fund

In the South East, funding has helped many projects such as the creation of new fish passes, protecting fish stocks, providing new angling platforms, and improving accessibility so more people than ever are able to enjoy the sport.

A number of significant projects across the South East have already been completed in the last year (see examples below) with more projects due to finish over the next few months thanks to the funding.

Arnie Warsop, an Environment Agency local fisheries officer said:

Anglers often ask us about how we spend the money raised from the sale of fishing licences. The Fisheries Improvement Programme is a prime example of the wide range of activities this income pays for to protect and improve fish stocks and fisheries and boost the popularity of angling.

The programme is also a great demonstration of our partnership efforts, with many of the projects completed with the support of landowners, local businesses and fisheries clubs – it's a real team effort! The more people who go fishing, the more we can invest and the more projects we can deliver.

All the projects will benefit anglers and local partners provide significant match funding and input from volunteers to make them a success. We want to hear from more clubs and fisheries about the work and projects they would like to see undertaken.

Hassocks Angling Club (AC) Swim Creation (West Sussex)

FIP funding was used to purchase decking and construction materials which club members then used to create disabled angling platforms to improve lake access for all club members.

Laybrook Lake habitat Improvement (West Sussex)

The banks on Byron lake were suffering from erosion and undercutting, potentially causing them to be unsafe for anglers at the Worthing & District Piscatorial Society. Funding enabled the eroded bank to be re-graded and the surrounding habitat enhanced. The works included bank re-profiling, new angling swims, emergent marginal planting to create fish refuge and spawning locations with hedge (hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel) and pollinator/wildflower meadow planting.

Peewit Lake (Hampshire)

Funds from the Environment Agency contributed to a project run by Eastleigh and District Angling Club which saw the construction and improvement of 16 swims (areas where anglers can access the water) at Peewit lake – improving the angling experience for all.

Panshanger Park, River Mimram (Hertfordshire)

Improvements in the in-channel habitat for riverine fish species such as wild brown trout, grayling, bullheads and minnows within an important Hertfordshire chalk stream. Strategic felling of 25 trees allowed sunlight to penetrate the already over-shaded channel. Soft engineering methods were used such as tree hinging which helped to create marginal cover. Work undertaken will help improve overall biodiversity in the chalk stream, improve refuge areas for juvenile fish and provide cleaner more suitable spawning gravels for fish and the invertebrate communities for years to come.

Improvements in the in-channel habitat for riverine fish.

Fordcombe River Medway (Kent) With the help of the Environment Agency, the Royal Tunbridge Wells Angling Society purchased and installed coir rolls, flow deflectors and stone on the River Medway, downstream of Fordcombe. This will help continue to improve instream habitat for spawning and juvenile fish, leading to increased and sustainable fish populations.

Railway Pond (West Oxfordshire)

Wantage & Grove Angling Club's Railway Pond venue was suffering from bank erosion. The funding helped to pay for bank repair work which also included the installation of a British Disabled Angler Association approved platform. To mitigate for the loss of natural bank, several floating islands, planted with native plant species, were also installed. The Environment Agency Fisheries Team has been working with the club for a number of years to help make improvements to the fishery and to provide resilience in times of prolonged dry weather.

Since FIP was established in 2015, over 850 projects have been successfully completed, with a total of £6 million invested from fishing licence sales

alone. These projects continue to positively impact fisheries, angling, ecosystems, and local communities across England.

Every penny the Environment Agency receives in fishing licence income is reinvested to improve our fisheries and protect England's waterways.

Fishing licences can be purchased here:

<https://www.gov.uk/fishing-licences/buy-a-fishing-licence>

[Abusive partner receives increased prison sentence following hearing at the Court of Appeal](#)

News story

Luke Lyndsay will serve a longer prison sentence for abusing two partners in two separate relationships.



A London man who was abusive in relationships with two women has received an increased prison sentence after the Solicitor General Alex Chalk, QC MP, referred his case to the Court of Appeal.

Luke Lyndsay, 25, abused two partners in two separate relationships.

Lyndsay acted violently towards the first victim, choking her and stabbing her in the hand. He also exhibited controlling and coercive behaviour against her, which included excessively aggressive behaviour, controlling what she wore and restricting her social media use.

In another relationship, Lyndsay deliberately damaged the victim's possessions and repeatedly threatened her with violence. He acted violently against the victim on multiple occasions, including throwing dinner plates at her, with one incident leaving a permanent scar on the victim's arm. On one

occasion Lyndsay also took an explicit video of the victim without her knowledge before he shared it via social media without her consent.

On 28 February 2022 Lyndsay was sentenced to 3 years and 6 months' imprisonment at Isleworth Crown Court for offences carried out during both of the relationships. He was also made subject to a lifetime restraining order against both of the victims.

The Solicitor General referred the original sentence to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme because he believed it did not reflect the severity of the abuse.

On 18 May the Court of Appeal found Lyndsay's sentence to be unduly lenient and increased it to 6 years' imprisonment.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General Alex Chalk QC MP said:

Luke Lyndsay's physical and mental abuse of two separate partners was both shameful and shocking. I welcome the decision of the Court of Appeal to increase the sentence, and to send a clear message that those who abuse their partners can expect to feel the full force of the law.

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[North Yorkshire project brings water quality boost to River Wiske](#)

New wetland habitat, reduced pollution and a restored river bank are just some of the enhancements made in a three-year £230,000 project to improve water quality in a North Yorkshire River.

The wide ranging 'Wild Wiske Revival: Clean and Green' project, carried out in partnership between the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, focused on restoration of the River Wiske, a heavily modified North Yorkshire river.

Land management caused sediment and its associated nutrients and chemicals to enter the river, smothering the river bed and leaving few areas for fish to spawn. This was exacerbated by livestock accessing the river and compounded by unstable river banks and erosion.

Three-year project

Working closely with landowners, the project – near Northallerton – started in April 2019 and centred on creating new habitat and reducing the amount of sediment and water run-off from land and farms entering the river. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust action included:

- installing over 3.5 miles of fencing to prevent livestock going into the river, reducing sediment and allowing the river banks to recover,
- planting over 1,500 trees and 300m of new hedgerow to stabilise the river banks, reduce run-off from the land into the river, provide habitat for wildlife and increase shade to cool the water in summer,
- reprofiling 1,300m of river bank to reduce erosion,
- uncovering a 500m culvert at South Otterington, creating 1.5ha of new wetland habitat and reducing flooding to farmland and farm buildings,
- giving advice to five landowners on pest management to reduce pollution entering the watercourse.

The new River Wiske channel following culvert removal

Great strides made to bring river to life

Allison Pierre, from the Environment Agency's Environment Programme team, said:

The River Wiske has a long history of intensive management for land drainage – historically it has been straightened, deepened and widened resulting in an unnatural channel with little value for wildlife.

This fantastic three-year project to improve conditions has made great strides in bringing the river to life.

The result is reduced pollution, improved water quality, new habitat for wildlife to thrive and reduced flooding, plus it's contributing to improvements under the Water Framework Directive.

Claire Burton, River Restoration Officer for Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, led the work on the ground. She added:

I really enjoyed the practical aspects of this project, which has allowed us to carry out significant changes to the watercourse and its tributaries, benefitting both wildlife and landowners.

Daylighting the culvert was the largest part of the project, turning a fallow field edge which regularly flooded into a meandering watercourse and wetland.

We have also fenced off sections of watercourse to prevent

livestock poaching the river banks, installed drinking bays, reprofiled the collapsing river banks and planted trees. In all it's a really beneficial project for the local area and environment.

The Water Framework Directive is a directive which requires all waterbodies to achieve good ecological status, but the river was lacking in macrophytes and phytobenthos, invertebrates, dissolved oxygen, phosphate and fish.

The project was funded by the Water Environment Grant (WEG) through the Rural Development Programme for England to ensure it met the requirements of the directive. The WEG team comprises the Environment Agency and Natural England, which decide which projects receive funding.

The 300m hedgerow was funded by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) 'Close the Gap' fund.

[Protecting wildlife during Salisbury River Park construction](#)

Work began in January to prepare the site ahead of the main construction work which will start in June.

Some trees and vegetation needed to be cleared and this work was completed early in the project to ensure trees were removed before nesting season. When construction work is complete the project team will plant 6 times as many trees as they have removed and many of the felled trees will be reused on site.

The Salisbury River Park project is a partnership between the Environment Agency, Wiltshire Council, Salisbury City Council and the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership. Once finished it will reduce flood risk to over 350 homes and businesses in Salisbury.

In addition to reducing flood risk, the Salisbury River Park project will provide major ecological, amenity, walking and cycling benefits. Improving biodiversity is a key part of this project.

Recently water voles within the site boundary have been trapped and relocated to some specially prepared habitat on the River Avon downstream near Ringwood. The voles are being closely monitored in their new home to ensure they thrive and establish a new community.

After relocating water voles from the area the team destroyed burrows to prevent other voles moving in before construction work starts. This work has

all been completed under the supervision of specialist ecologists.

The riverbank has now been temporarily covered in a membrane to prevent other animals from burrowing. When work starts on this channel in July the membrane will be removed and the bank fully excavated. This is the earliest that the team can start in the channel to minimise the risk to any juvenile fish. Overall, the scheme works will greatly improve the habitat for water voles, and they are expected to naturally recolonise this area from nearby populations.

Throughout the work ecologists are on site surveying and monitoring for other animals, including otters and nesting birds, to ensure there is no detriment to them as a result of any of the works.

Ron Curtis, Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager at The Environment Agency said:

We have reached the important stage of preparing the Salisbury River Park site ready for construction to begin later this year. This is the first step in providing better flood protection for the city. We know the devastating impact that flooding can have, which is why protecting people and communities is our top priority.

The scheme will bring multiple benefits for residents and businesses in Salisbury, including:

- creating wildlife corridors and improving biodiversity
- improving the recreational and amenity value of the area, creating green spaces that are more pleasant to move through and spend time in
- promoting sustainable travel by expanding and improving the network of footpaths and cycle paths in the area, as well as improving the coach park
- enabling growth and the regeneration of key development sites in the city centre
- improving climate change resilience
- enhancing the tourism offer in Salisbury

Cllr Dr Mark McClelland, Cabinet Member for Transport, Waste, Street Scene and Flooding at Wiltshire Council, said:

It is a key priority for us that Wiltshire's natural beauty, its historic sites, houses and unique habitats and wildlife are protected and nurtured. The Salisbury River Park project is an exciting project which fully embraces these goals, and we look forward to works starting in earnest in the coming months.

Paddy Bradley CEO Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership said of the announcement:

We welcome the completion of this first stage of the work for the Salisbury River Park. The work undertaken will help create an attractive environment, increasing habitat and biodiversity for future generations to come whilst reducing the risk of flooding to the city. All measures have been taken to minimise the impact of this temporary loss of habitat and we look forward to seeing the improved wetland and woodland habitats and the rewilding of this internationally important chalk stream environment.

Full site mobilisation will start in mid-late June with site compounds being established on the long stay Central Car Park and Ashley Road Open Space.

Further information on the project can be found at:

www.salisburyriverparkphase1.com.