

New legislation to crack down on cruel illegal hare coursing

Plans to strengthen the powers and penalties available to tackle the barbaric practice of hare coursing were set out by the Government today (Tuesday 4 January 2022).

Brown hares are widespread across the UK but numbers are declining. Their population is estimated at less than half a million in England and they are listed as a priority in the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan. An iconic sight in the British countryside, the brown hare is known for its long, black-tipped ears and fast running – it can reach speeds of 45mph – and is most commonly found on arable land and open grassland. They face a range of threats, including poaching and habitat loss.

Hare coursing is an illegal activity – where dogs are used to chase, catch and kill hares – and is a serious problem in some rural areas. Not only does hare coursing involve cruelty to wild animals, it is also associated with a range of other criminal activities, including theft, criminal damage, violence and intimidation.

In amendments tabled to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill today, the Government has set out measures to strengthen law enforcement for hare coursing by increasing penalties, introducing new criminal offences and creating new powers for the courts to disqualify convicted offenders from owning or keeping dogs – this includes an order to reimburse the costs incurred when dogs are seized in kennels.

The proposals include:

- Increasing the maximum penalty for trespassing in pursuit of game under the Game Acts (the Game Act 1831 and the Night Poaching Act 1828) to an unlimited fine and introducing – for the first time – the possibility of up to six months' imprisonment.
- Two new criminal offences: firstly, trespass with the intention of using a dog to search for or pursue a hare; and secondly, being equipped to trespass with the intention of using a dog to search for or pursue a hare both punishable on conviction by an unlimited fine and/or up to six months' imprisonment.
- New powers for the courts to order, on conviction, the reimbursement of costs incurred by the police in kennelling dogs seized in connection with a hare coursing-related offence.
- New powers for the courts to make an order, on conviction, disqualifying an offender from owning or keeping a dog.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

There are persistent groups who illegally perpetuate hare coursing

creating challenges for the police.

These new measures will give the police the additional powers to bring prosecutions and confiscate dogs from owners involved in hare coursing.

To deliver these measures, the Government will be tabling amendments to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill for debate at Lords Report stage in January.

Home Secretary, Priti Patel, said:

Illegal hare coursing has blighted rural communities for too long, resulting in criminal damage, threatening violence and intimidation against farmers and landowners.

Those responsible are often involved in other criminal activities – including drugs and firearms offences. I have been a longstanding supporter for essential reforms to our laws to stop hare coursing which is why we will act to prevent more people from suffering as a result of the actions of a law-breaking minority.

We are introducing new measures in the Policing, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to empower and equip the police and courts with the powers they need to combat this crime. They will deter those breaking the law, and send a clear message that we will do all we can to keep our rural communities safe.

RSPCA chief executive Chris Sherwood said:

We're pleased to see proposals to crackdown on hare coursing; a barbaric bloodsport that sees hare cruelly chased, caught and killed by dogs. It's time hare coursing was consigned to the history books, where it belongs.

Hare coursing gangs inflict fear and suffering on their targets – the hare – but our rescue teams have also seen many dogs, used for coursing, coming into our care having been injured during the sport or abandoned when their owners no longer have use for them. This new legislation will give police and the courts more powers to end this cruel practice and the suffering it causes.

NFU Deputy President Stuart Roberts said:

The NFU welcomes government plans to table amendments which would strengthen the law and finally give rural police forces and the courts the necessary powers to tackle hare coursing and the wider problem of organised crime.

Our members have had to deal with the impact of illegal hare coursing for far too long and will be relieved that after much campaigning by the NFU and others over many years there is now light at the end of the tunnel.

I hope this will signal the start of a real crackdown on these organised gangs of criminals who break into fields to let dogs loose to chase hares, causing huge damage to crops and farm property and intimidating people living in rural communities.

In May 2021 Government announced, as part of the Action Plan for Animal Welfare, plans to introduce legislation to crack down on illegal hare coursing. Today's announcement marks the Government's recognition of the need for urgent action.

This is part of Government's wider commitment both to improving animal welfare and to supporting the work of the police in protecting our rural communities.

[Dr Gillian Fairfield – Reappointment as Chair of Disclosure and Barring Service](#)



DBS Chairman, Dr Gillian Fairfield

Biography

Dr Gillian Fairfield, Chair of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has been reappointed for a second term of 3 years. This reappointment, commencing on 1st December 2021, has been made in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Career

Dr Gillian Fairfield has been Chair of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Board since December 2018.

Gillian has worked in clinical, managerial and leadership roles across different sectors and specialities, in hospitals, general practice and public health. Gillian has held four different CEO posts in both mental health and acute Trusts, within the NHS.

In 2012, Gillian was appointed a Board Member of the National Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) by the Justice Secretary. She chaired the YJB Performance committee and was a member of the Finance Audit and Risk committee and the national Youth Justice Oversight group. She stood down in December 2021 when her tenure came to an end.

Chair, DBS

The DBS Chair is responsible for leading the Board in carrying out its responsibilities to deliver ministerial expectations and the performance objectives of the DBS. As such, the DBS Chair is generally responsible to the Home Secretary for the governance and performance of the DBS.

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Edited the third paragraph under the heading, 'Career'.

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[Better rail journeys sooner for Leeds, as £161 million upgrade delivered](#)

- rail Minister Wendy Morton visits £161 million upgrade of Leeds Station – the first phase of major improvements set to transform rail journeys
- new tracks, longer platforms and improved reliability will ensure passengers have more seats, more services and more punctual journeys
- upgrade completed following publication of government's £96 billion Integrated Rail Plan – will lead to reduced journey times and transform connections for passengers across Yorkshire

Rail Minister Wendy Morton has today (4 January 2022) hailed the completed Leeds Station upgrades as a major milestone in delivering a modern, fully connected transport hub fit for the future.

Visiting Leeds Station to see the completion of £161 million of upgrade works, the Minister will meet with former apprentices and senior staff of Network Rail responsible for delivering key [upgrades to the Transpennine Route](#).

The visit follows the publication of the [Integrated Rail Plan](#), a £96 billion programme of investment targeted at transforming rail connections across the North and Midlands.

Rail Minister Wendy Morton said:

Leeds station is a major hub right at the heart of the North, not only a gateway to one of the UK's most vibrant and lively cities but a vital transport link enabling people from all over the country to travel for work, pleasure and connect with friends and family.

These upgrades are a huge milestone making these journeys even easier, providing passengers with more seats, more services and more punctual journeys all while building upon our unprecedented Integrated Rail Plan – delivering a modern, fully connected transport hub fit for the future quicker than under previous plans.

Through the unprecedented investment under the Integrated Rail Plan, passengers in Leeds will see dramatic improvements to their journey times, far sooner than under previous proposals.

This includes full electrification to York, and of the Calder Valley line between Bradford and Leeds, cutting journey times to as little as 12 minutes. Our plans for Northern Powerhouse Rail will see services reaching Manchester from Leeds in 33 minutes, a saving of 22 minutes compared to today, and passengers will reach Birmingham 29 minutes faster than at present.

The Integrated Rail Plan has also kickstarted work on the West Yorkshire Mass Transit System, righting the historic wrong that Leeds is the largest city in Western Europe without a mass transit network, and £100 million of development funding is focused on determining the best way to bring HS2 services to Leeds.

Councillor James Lewis, Leader of Leeds City Council, said:

This is an important milestone in our continued ambitions to modernise Leeds' rail connections to make them fit to support what is one of the fastest-growing economies with the busiest railway station in the North of the UK.

These upgrades will improve the passenger experience and are a first step towards beginning to address our capacity issues at Leeds station. We will work with the government to secure a robust strategy for ongoing enhancements to improve connectivity for Leeds that will benefit Yorkshire, the North and the UK.

The upgrades at Leeds Station – one of the country's busiest rail hubs – were finalised by engineers working round the clock over the New Year break.

Paul Tuohy, Chief Executive of Campaign for Better Transport, said:

Expanding and improving the rail network will be key to reducing carbon emissions and helping cities to thrive.

The upgrades at Leeds station will enable more people to travel by rail and make journeys more reliable, an important step towards a greener transport future.

The completion of works has seen the lengthening of platforms, creation of a new Platform 0 and a new concourse delivered, ensuring passengers experience a more modern station with improved connections, longer trains and more seats and services.

The major improvements to tracks will also significantly boost the reliability and punctuality of services entering the station.

[One year anniversary of UK deploying Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine](#)

- A year ago today, the UK became the first country in the world to administer the Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine
- Vaccination programme has been a phenomenal success, saving countless lives and reducing pressure on NHS

One year ago today [Tuesday 4 January 2021] the UK became the first country in the world to administer the Oxford University/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

Brian Pinker, 82, was the first person to receive the life-saving vaccine outside of clinical trials at Oxford University Hospital at 7.30am.

Since then, around 50 million AstraZeneca vaccines have been administered in the UK, saving countless lives, keeping people out of hospital and reducing the pressure on the NHS.

To mark the anniversary, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Sajid Javid, will visit a vaccination centre in London to thank hard-working NHS staff and volunteers delivering jabs.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Backed by government funding, the UK-made Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine has played an absolutely crucial role in our fight against COVID-19, saving countless lives in the UK and around the world.

I'm extremely proud of our world-leading researchers and scientists who are responsible for developing some of the most effective vaccines and treatments during the pandemic and the NHS for the incredible roll out.

The UK's vaccination and booster programme is world leading but with the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, it is more important than ever that people come forward for their vaccines and booster to top up your immunity this winter and protect the progress we have made.

The government invested early in Oxford University's team, supporting their vaccine technology since 2016 and their COVID-19 jabs since March 2020 with more than £88 million to help research, develop and manufacture the vaccine.

The National Institute for Health Research's (NIHR) helped recruit thousands of volunteers from across the UK for the phase 3 clinical trials and supported the researchers, which paved the way for approval by the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Around 2.5 billion doses have been distributed at-cost to more than 170 countries. Almost two-thirds of these have gone to low and lower-middle-income countries, including more than 30 million doses donated by the UK through COVAX or bilaterally. The UK will donate a further 20 million AstraZeneca doses to countries in need this year as part of the government's commitment to donate 100 million doses overall.

Vaccines Minister Maggie Throup said:

The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is a UK success story and demonstrates what can be achieved when researchers, scientists and the government work together.

The at-cost vaccine has given billions of people around the world a way to fight back against this virus. "Please get your vaccines and booster to protect yourself and your families this winter.

The COVID-19 vaccination programme is the largest in British history and was established at unprecedented speed, with thousands of vaccine centres set up

rapidly in England, meaning around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination clinic.

The government's Vaccine Taskforce secured early access to almost 340 million doses of the most promising vaccine candidates in advance for the entire UK, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories, enabling a rapid deployment once approved by the medicines regulator.

NHS National Medical Director Professor Stephen Powis said: > Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of scientists and doctors, the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine was developed in just a matter of months instead of years, with NHS staff working tirelessly to roll the jabs out to millions across the country. > The Oxford Astra Zeneca vaccine has played a crucial role in the biggest and most successful immunisation programme in NHS history, and I'd like to take this opportunity to remind people again that there are still hundreds of thousands of appointments available for first, second and booster jabs so please come forward and get jabbed.

The UK led the world on vaccine research, providing results for three of the successful vaccine candidates through huge phase 3 trials for Oxford AstraZeneca, Janssen and Novavax vaccines. The Novavax trial is the largest ever double blind placebo controlled trial in the UK, recruiting 15,000 participants from 35 research sites in just over two months.

More than 133 million COVID-19 vaccinations have been administered in the UK in just over a year, including around 34 million boosters and third doses, securing vital protection against Omicron.

The Get Boosted Now campaign led to a huge increase in vaccination rates, with over 8 million jabs administered in just over two weeks in England (a 45% increase), between 12 December – when the Prime Minister set out a target to offer all eligible adults in England a booster by the end of January – and Thursday 30 December – when the target was achieved.

The NHS in England has broken record after record in that time – including the highest number of vaccinations ever recorded in a single day: 830,000 top-up jabs reported on Saturday 18 December. This was also the day the UK hit over one million vaccinations in total, including first, second, third and booster doses – jumping from 928,000 the previous day.

Notes to editors

- UK Government funding for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine:
- To date the UK Government invested over £88 million in funding to develop and manufacture the vaccine this includes £2.6 million through NIHR and UKRI for research of the vaccine, £20 million for clinical trials and £65.5 million for early manufacturing of the vaccine.
- The Government also invested £8.75 million to set up the rapid

deployment facility at Oxford Biomedica to manufacture the vaccine at scale.

- The UK government had invested in the Oxford team and their technology since 2016, and in their COVID specific vaccines since March 2020.
- The key results that allowed approval from the regulator came from the Phase 3 trial. These results were enabled by the UK public who volunteered in their thousands to take part in that trial and the National Institute for Health Research infrastructure that facilitated their recruitment and supported the researchers.
- The UK led the world on vaccine research, providing results for three of the successful vaccine candidates through huge Phase 3 trials for Oxford AstraZeneca, Janssen and Novavax vaccines. The Novavax trial the largest ever double blind placebo controlled trial in the UK. Recruiting 15,000 participants from 35 research sites in just over two months.

[UK and Taiwan sign MOU on exchange of driving licences](#)

World news story

Holders of UK Driving Licences, living in Taiwan, can exchange them for Taiwan driving licences starting 1 January 2022



The UK and Taiwan have entered into an arrangement that will enable the exchange of driving licences issued by the respective Licensing Authorities. Holders of a valid UK driving licence who are currently resident in Taiwan will be able to exchange their licence for a Taiwan one, and vice versa for holders of Taiwan driving licences in the UK. The arrangement will come into

effect from 1 January 2022, when applications will open.

This arrangement is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding signed between John Dennis, Representative at the British Office and Kelly W. Hsieh, Representative of the Taipei Representative Office in the UK via an online signing ceremony on 23 December, witnessed in Taipei by Harry Ho-jen Tseng, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

John Dennis, Representative at the British Office Taipei said:

I am extremely pleased and grateful to welcome this new arrangement on behalf of the British community in Taiwan. It comes after much anticipation and a lot of hard work on both sides. People in both the UK and Taiwan will be able to enjoy the benefits of this new arrangement from 2022. It offers major new flexibilities, particularly to long-term UK residents of Taiwan, and it symbolises the powerful and deepening cooperation between the UK and Taiwan in so many areas. We are delighted to be able to announce it today.

Under the arrangement, an exchanged Taiwan driving licence will last for 6 years from the date of issue. Detailed guidance on how holders of UK Driving Licences will be able to apply to exchange them for Taiwan Driving Licences can be found at [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) page.

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