

# UK achievements celebrated in new children's book to mark The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

Primary school children across the United Kingdom will receive a book that celebrates the achievements of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth over the last 70 years.

The book will be commissioned by the UK Government and designed to celebrate the people and places of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth. It will teach primary school children about recent and historical events, inspirational people, landmark innovations and inventions, and a selection of our best art, design, and culture.

The book will explore the role of the Monarch and what the Platinum Jubilee represents, so primary school children across the country can understand and engage with the celebrations next year, while broadening their education.

The content will continue to be refined over the coming months but will cover landmark achievements such as the construction of the Channel Tunnel, election of the first female Prime Minister and the invention of the World Wide Web, so children across the country can learn more about their home and its history.

The book will also look at a diverse range of rich culture and notable names for children to explore, including famous artists, designers, fashion designers, and musicians, capturing the true spirit of the last 70 years and the Queen's reign.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

For 70 years Her Majesty The Queen has played an instrumental role in the events, people and places that have helped shape the United Kingdom and Commonwealth.

From the hundreds of charities and organisations of which she is patron, to the 14 Prime Ministers who have served during her reign – thousands of children will be able to read about our great nation, its history and future.

It will be available as an audio book, with plans for it to be in English, Welsh, Gaelic, and Irish in advance of the Jubilee Holiday weekend. The print version will include a QR code so children can scan the code to be taken to further material online, so they can learn independently.

The book will also form part of the wider programme of events and activities planned for The Queen's Platinum Jubilee next year, including a concert,

street parties, and an extra bank holiday for the Jubilee weekend itself from Thursday 2 to Sunday 5 June 2022.

The Department for Education will shortly issue an Invitation to tender for a contractor to see through the production of the book, including design, printing and distribution.

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## [More support to help people to become HGV drivers among package of government measures to ease risk of shortages](#)

- Up to 4,000 people will be trained as new HGV drivers to help tackle skills shortages and support more people to launch careers within the logistics sector.
- Package of measures includes using MOD examiners to help increase immediate HGV testing capacity by thousands over the next 12 weeks.
- Nearly 1 million letters to be sent to all drivers who currently hold an HGV driving licence, encouraging them back into the industry.
- 5,000 HGV drivers and 5,500 poultry workers added to existing visa scheme until Christmas 2021 to ease supply chain pressures in food and haulage industries during exceptional circumstances this year.

Up to 4,000 people will soon be able to take advantage of training courses to become HGV drivers, as part of a package of measures announced today (25 September 2021) by the government to ease temporary supply chain pressures in food haulage industries, brought on by the pandemic and the global economy rebounding around the world.

The Department for Education is investing up to £10 million to create new skills bootcamps to train up to 3,000 more people to become HGV drivers. The free, short, intensive courses will train drivers to be road ready and gain a category C or category C&E licence, helping to tackle the current HGV driver shortage. An additional 1,000 people are expected to be trained through courses accessed locally and funded by the government's adult education budget.

Fuel tanker drivers need additional safety qualifications, which the government will work with industry to ensure drivers can access as quickly as possible.

To help make sure new drivers can be road ready as quickly as possible, the Department for Transport (DfT) have also agreed to work with Driver and

Vehicles Standards Agency (DVSA) to ensure that tests will be available for participants who have completed training courses as soon as possible.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is also announcing today the immediate deployment of their Defence Driving Examiners (DDEs) to increase the country's testing capacity. MOD examiners will work alongside DVSA examiners, providing thousands of extra tests over the next 12 weeks.

The package comes as the DfT, along with leading logistics organisations have worked with the DVLA to send nearly [1 million letters to thank HGV drivers for their vital role supporting our economy](#), and to encourage those who have left the industry to return. The letter, which will arrive on doormats over the coming days, sets out that the steps the road haulage sector is taking to improve the industry, including increased wages, flexible working and fixed hours.

Alongside this, 5,000 HGV drivers will be able to come to the UK for 3 months in the run-up to Christmas, providing short-term relief for the haulage industry. A further 5,500 visas for poultry workers will also be made available for the same short period, to avoid any potential further pressures on the food industry during this exceptional period.

Recruitment for additional short-term HGV drivers and poultry workers will begin in October and these visas will be valid until 24 December 2021. UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) are preparing to process the required visa applications, once made, in a timely manner.

However, we want to see employers make long term investments in the UK domestic workforce instead of relying on labour to build a high-wage, high-skill economy.

Visas will not be the long term solution, and reform within the industry is vital. That's why the government continues to support the industry in solving this issue in the long term through improved testing and hiring, with better pay, working conditions and diversity.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

This package of measures builds on the important work we have already done to ease this global crisis in the UK, and this government continues to do everything we can to help the haulage and food industries contend with the HGV driver shortage.

We are acting now but the industries must also play their part with working conditions continuing to improve and the deserved salary increases continuing to be maintained in order for companies to retain new drivers.

After a very difficult 18 months, I know how important this Christmas is for all of us and that's why we're taking these steps at the earliest opportunity to ensure preparations remain on track.

Separately, the government is also bringing in legislation to allow delegated driving examiners at the three emergency services and the MOD to be able to conduct driving tests for one another. This will give the emergency services greater flexibility and help increase the number of tests DVSA examiners can provide HGV examiners.

The government will also provide funding for both medical and HGV licences for any adult who completes an HGV driving qualification accessed through the Adult Education Budget in academic year 2021/22. Previously, adults who took these qualifications had to pay for their own licences. This change will be backdated and applied to anyone who started one of these qualifications on or after August 1st 2021.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

HGV drivers keep this country running. We are taking action to tackle the shortage of drivers by removing barriers to help more people to launch new well-paid careers in the industry, supporting thousands to get the training they need to be road ready.

As we build back from the pandemic we're committed to supporting people, no matter their background, to get the skills and training they need to get good jobs at any stage of their lives, while creating the talent pipeline businesses need for the future.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

It is a top priority to ensure that there are enough workers across the country's supply chains to make sure they remain strong and resilient.

We have listened to concerns from the sector and we are acting to alleviate what is a very tight labour market.

The government has been able to bring forward these solutions in response to a global issue made worse by coronavirus thanks to our existing work in this area. We have already taken a range of steps to support the industry, including streamlining the process for new HGV drivers and increasing the number of driving tests. Our measures provided a rapid increase in capacity and allow for an extra 50,000 tests to take place per year.

Progress has already been made in testing and hiring, with improving pay, working conditions and diversity. We continue to closely monitor labour supply and work with sector leaders to understand how we can best ease particular pinch points. Through our Plan for Jobs we're helping people across the UK retrain, build new skills and get back into work.

The Food and Drink Federation's Chief Executive, Ian Wright CBE, said:

We welcome the government's pragmatic decision to temporarily add HGV drivers and poultry workers to the existing visa scheme.

This is something UK food and drink manufacturers have asked for over the last few months – including in industry's Grant Thornton report – to alleviate some of the pressure labour shortages have placed on the food supply chain.

This is a start but we need the government to continue to collaborate with industry and seek additional long term solutions.

Elizabeth de Jong, Logistics UK's Director of Policy, said:

Logistics UK welcomes the government package of measures aimed at improving the ongoing driver crisis. The government's decision to grant 5,000 temporary visas for HGV drivers to help in the short term is a huge step forward; we are so pleased the government has listened to our calls and has made this bold decision to support the UK economy. We are also delighted that DfT have agreed to jointly send nearly 1 million letters to all drivers who currently hold an HGV driving licence. With fantastic HGV driving opportunities available in the logistics industry, now is the perfect time to consider returning to the occupation.

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## [Riverbanks and watercourses to be planted with new woodland](#)

Over 3,000 hectares of new woodlands are set to be planted along England's rivers and watercourses with backing from the country's leading environmental organisations, Forestry Minister Lord Goldsmith announced today (Saturday 25 September).

Planting trees on and around riverbanks, or allowing them to grow naturally, can help to improve water quality by blocking the runoff of pollutants into rivers, manage flood risks by slowing the flow of water, boost biodiversity by creating new habitat corridors and make our rivers more climate resilient by providing shade and cooling water temperatures.

There are 242,262km of watercourses in England, and it is hoped that by planting trees in this way they will contribute to a natural network of habitats across the country as part of our plans to expand, improve and connect these places across our towns, cities and countryside.

The Woodlands For Water project aims to create 3,150 hectares of trees in six

river catchment areas from Devon to Cumbria by March 2025. To support farmers and landowners to create these woodlands, they will be able to apply for funding through the [England Woodland Creation Offer](#) grant which provides greater financial incentives for landowners and farmers to plant and manage trees, including along rivers and watercourses.

**Speaking from a National Trust river tree planting project, Forestry Minister Lord Goldsmith said:**

This is a hugely exciting and untapped area for woodland creation. The benefits of planting trees by rivers are vast – from helping biodiversity recover by creating more natural riverbanks; to slowing the flow of surface water to reduce the risk of flooding; and improving water quality by buffering rivers from harmful agricultural pollution.

The Government is committed to trebling tree-planting rates by the end of this parliament, and in this vitally important year for tackling climate change with the Glasgow COP summit, this partnership marks an important next step in our plans to build back greener.

**Forestry Commission Chair Sir William Worsley said:**

I am delighted to be working with partners to launch the Woodlands For Water project and deliver another major part of the England Trees Action Plan.

By putting the right trees in the right place, helped by our new England Woodland Creation Offer, the Woodlands For Water project can offer numerous benefits, from creating new woodland habitats; protecting existing habitats such as chalk streams; improving environments for fish by reducing water temperature, and helping rivers adapt to climate change.

Supported by Defra, the project will be carried out by the 'Riverscapes' Partnership comprising of experts from the Rivers Trust, National Trust, Woodland Trust and Beaver Trust, which will be on hand to provide expert assistance in the selected river catchment areas across England, ensuring there is pipeline of projects for riparian planting in future years.

**The Rivers Trust Chief Executive Officer Mark Lloyd said:**

The Riverscapes Partnership brings together leading national organisations who want to revive our rivers, restore nature and increase our resilience to droughts and floods.

Woodlands for Water is a very exciting first project for the

partnership to work with Defra to meet the government's targets on tree planting and its commitment to leave the environment in a better state for the next generation.

By planting the right trees in the right places, we can tackle multiple problems and provide multiple benefits: more nature, less flooding, more carbon locked up in trees and soils, fewer droughts, less pollution, more wild places for people to enjoy. We hope that this project will be the pathfinder for a route map to the revival of rivers and their catchment areas that can benefit every corner of England, and the rest of the UK.

**The Woodland Trust's Head of Landscape Scale Delivery Dr Adrian Southern said:**

We are delighted to be part of what is an immensely important project, both from a perspective of combating climate change with more trees but also for showing how it is essential they are planted in the right places.

Tree establishment near rivers and in their catchments can have significant benefits for people and wildlife, from natural flood management to stabilising riverbanks and reducing sediment flow into water courses, to creating great places for people to enjoy.

This commitment from Defra could be catalytic in supporting the Riverscapes partnership to start to really deliver the transformational change needed to meet the threats of climate change and wildlife loss.

**The National Trust's Director of Land and Nature Harry Bowell said:**

With 90 per cent of UK floodplains not fit for purpose and creating flood issues for communities, we fully recognise the value of trees to our river corridors in helping to slow flood waters, soak up carbon and keep rivers cool in the face of rising temperatures.

This work will enhance the projects we already have underway where our primary focus has been the conservation and health of the river channel itself. This partnership and funding will allow us to look at the wider river corridor to further enhance this work.

**James Wallace, Beaver Trust Chief Executive Officer, said:**

As members of the Riverscapes partnership with Defra, we are delighted to be a part of this first big first step towards paying farmers to create a nature recovery network of mosaic habitats

along our rivers, working together to breathe life back into our land.

We hope in time farmers will be incentivised not only to plant trees but to create wetlands, floodplain meadows and other spaces for natural processes and wildlife to regenerate in riparian buffer zones.

Collaboration between Government, industry, landowners, communities, and the NGO sector is key if we are to help communities build resilience to the climate and the ecological emergency. The Riverscapes partnership looks forward to helping engage the farming community, connecting landowners with each other and much-needed public money, and developing systemic solutions like blended finance, empowering rapid change in how we manage our rivers and land.

Today's announcement is a key action of the recently published [England Trees Action Plan](#) which outlined the Government's strategy to get more trees in the ground that will help to deliver wide ranging benefits for nature, climate and people, and contributes towards the commitment to treble planting rates in England by the end of this Parliament.

Outside of the catchments targeted by this new Riverscapes Partnership, Defra's other Woodland Creation Partnerships are supporting land owners to plant trees to meet a range of objectives, including along watercourses.

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## [Platinum Jubilee Medal revealed](#)

- Design features portrait of Her Majesty The Queen and the Royal Crest
- Medal will be awarded to serving frontline members of the police, fire, emergency services, prison services and Armed Forces with five years service as part of four-day commemorations taking place next year

The design of the medal awarded to a number of front line emergency workers to mark Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee next year has been unveiled today.

The medal, which has been designed by Timothy Noad of the College of Arms, will be awarded to individual George and Victoria Cross recipients and serving members of the Armed Forces and emergency services, among others, and acts as a token of the nation's thanks to those who diligently serve the public.

The medal, which is made of nickel silver, features an image of The Queen with the Latin inscription 'Elizabeth II Dei Gratia Regina Fid Def' which



stands for 'Elizabeth II, By the Grace of God, Queen, Defender of the Faith'.

Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee is a wonderful opportunity to recognise the dedication and service of those who, like the Queen, tirelessly serve our country.

From the troops who serve overseas to the emergency services workers at home who run towards danger when others would flee, we are honoured to have such dedicated and professional public servants who keep us safe.

2022 is an opportunity for us to come together as a nation to celebrate and say thank you to Her Majesty and all those who work so hard to make Britain Great.

The history of awarding medals to mark Royal Jubilee's dates back to the Victorian period when the first medal was awarded to mark the 50th anniversary of Queen Victoria's reign.

Those who will receive the medal for Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee are:

- Serving members of the Armed Forces that have completed five full calendar years of service on 6 February 2022.
- Frontline emergency services personnel that have been in paid service, retained or in a voluntary capacity, dealing with emergencies as part of their conditions of service, and have completed five full calendar years of service on 6 February 2022.
- Prison services personnel who are publicly employed and are regularly exposed to difficult and sometimes emergency situations that have completed five full calendar years of service on 6 February 2022.
- Members of the Royal Household with one year of qualifying service.
- Living individual recipients of the George Cross.
- Living individual recipients of the Victoria Cross.

2022 will be a blockbuster year of celebrations with plans to mark Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee with a four-day Bank Holiday weekend from 2 – 5 June which includes Trooping the Colour, the lighting of beacons, a Service of Thanksgiving, a concert, Platinum Pageant and nation-wide street parties.

As well as celebrating 70 years of Her Majesty The Queen's reign, Britain will host the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham and the Festival 2022, which will celebrate the cross collaboration of the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths sectors.

## **ENDS**

### **Notes to editors**

The government is developing plans to mark the contribution of key workers, including NHS workers, to the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic and will announce further plans in due course.

For those eligible, there is no application process – eligible staff will be automatically notified via their employer.

Government departments are responsible for applying the eligibility criteria (agreed across Government) to their staff and those organisations they sponsor for Honours purposes.

The government has also launched its [Platinum Jubilee](#) website which includes an interactive map for people and organisations to contribute to and search for information on events and activities taking place near to them.

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## **[Rabbits help rare species and unique Norfolk and Suffolk habitat](#)**

Efforts to save England's most threatened species from extinction are turning the tide for wildlife in a unique landscape spanning Norfolk and Suffolk.

The fortunes of species classed as declining, rare, near-threatened or endangered are now improving in [the Brecks](#) after 4 years of work to support their habitat.

The National Lottery Heritage-funded [Shifting Sands project](#) – a partnership of 10 organisations led by [Natural England](#). It has seen 5 kilometres of 'wildlife highways' created, more than 100 specimens of rare plants re-introduced, habitat created and restored across 12 sites, species encouraged, and landscape-management practices improved.

### **Species increasing in number**

As a result, 7 species of plant, bird and insect are increasing in number and many more are benefitting.

Among the species recovering are rare plants such as the prostrate perennial knawel that is unique to the Brecks, basil thyme and field wormwood.

Unique: The prostrate perennial knawel is found nowhere else in the world.

The endangered wormwood moonshiner beetle, lunar yellow underwing moth and 5 banded digger tailed wasp are also increasing.

All these species are identified in the [UK's Biodiversity Action Plan](#) as being priorities for conservation.

## **Rabbit revolution**

Perhaps the most surprising species to benefit is the European rabbit.

Although often considered a pest, for certain habitats – like the Brecks – the rabbit is a 'keystone species' that holds together the entire ecosystem. Their numbers are, however, declining regionally, nationally and globally, even being classed as endangered in their native region, the Iberian Peninsula.

Their grazing and digging activity keeps the ground in a condition that is perfect for sustaining other species that would otherwise move on – or die out.

In partnership with the [University of East Anglia](#), Natural England has encouraged a rabbit revolution in the Brecks. They have produced a [toolkit helping landowners](#) of similar habitats do the same.

## **Encouraging rabbit activity**

The toolkit includes cost-effective ways of encouraging rabbits, including creating piles of felled branches and banks of soil.

Monitoring over the past 3 years has shown the interventions are working, with evidence of significantly higher amounts of rabbit activity.

The open habitat maintained by rabbits supports 2 rare plants: the prostrate perennial knawel – found nowhere else in the world – and field wormwood.

These flora's fortunes have been improved by [Plantlife](#). As part of Shifting Sands, the conservation charity has re-introduced 110 specimens at 9 sites, helped restore habitat in which they thrive, and improved the way land is managed.

## **Rare plants thriving**

Prostrate perennial knawel introductions are thriving. The 75 plants introduced have increased to 201, while field wormwood is enjoying a threefold increase – a boon for the insects that depend on it.

Among those insects is the wormwood moonshiner. This endangered beetle has a particular taste for field wormwood seeds. It is now being found in record-high numbers, on industrial estate verges and a patch of land within a housing estate.

Endangered: The wormwood moonshiner beetle is now being found in record

numbers.

Image credit: Brian Eversham

Elsewhere in the Brecks, Shifting Sands has seen [Forestry England](#) remove trees and disturb the ground, to widen and connect corridor-like spaces through [King's Forest](#).

## Forest fast lanes

Acting as 'highways' for heathland wildlife, they have resulted in increased numbers of rare species. This includes the basil thyme, lunar yellow underwing and the 5-banded tailed digger wasp, as well as benefited rare bird species like nightjar and woodlark. The digger wasp has gone from being recorded in just 2 forest rides to 9.

Pip Mountjoy, Shifting Sands project manager at Natural England, said:

The Brecks were described by Charles Dickens as "barren". They are anything but. Their 370 square miles of sandy heathland, open grassland and forest support almost 13,000 species, making it one of the UK's most important areas for wildlife.

That wildlife is under threat. Felling trees and encouraging a species that is often considered a pest may seem a strange solution. But in this instance, carefully managed 'disturbance' is exactly what this landscape and its biodiversity needs.

The project's interventions have provided a lifeline for this unique landscape, and shown how biodiversity can be promoted by 'disturbing' places – not just by leaving them alone.

These rare habitats are becoming overgrown and species are declining as a result of changing land management practices and human impacts. It's our responsibility to restore and maintain these spaces for nature. Some of these species exist only here and, if lost, will be lost forever.

Much of work has been carried out by an army of volunteers. More than 400 have dedicated 640 days to the project and received training in surveying techniques and species identification. Local volunteer groups such as [Breckland Flora Group](#) monitor these rare species across the Brecks and contributed hugely to the project.

Helping hands: More than 400 volunteers dedicated 640 days to make the project a success.

## Fighting species extinction

Shifting Sands is 1 of 19 projects across England that make up the national [Back from the Brink](#) initiative. Together, these projects aim to save 20 species from extinction and benefit over 200 more.

Established in 2017 with £4.7 million from the [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) and £2.1 million from other bodies. Back from the Brink was the [first nationwide co-ordinated effort](#) to bring together charities, conservation organisations and government bodies to save threatened species.

The project is a major contributor to achieving the [government's biodiversity goals](#), as well as meeting the UK's international commitments under the [UN's Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

The project is funded by the [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) and other bodies. Involved in Shifting Sands are [Buglife](#), [Butterfly Conservation](#), the [Elveden estate](#), [Forestry England](#), [Natural England](#), [Norfolk Wildlife Trust](#), [Plantlife](#), [RSPB](#), [Suffolk Wildlife Trust](#) and [University of East Anglia](<https://www.uea.ac.uk/>).

## About the Brecks

The Brecks straddles the Norfolk and Suffolk border. It is 1 of the most unusual landscapes in lowland England, with vast conifer plantations and large arable fields edged with pines. It developed from an ancient landscape of sandy, chalky soils, wide open heaths, sheep walks, medieval rabbit warrens and shallow river valleys. It is 1 of the most important areas for wildlife in the UK, home to 12,845 species including birds such as nightjar, woodlark and 65% of the UK's stone curlews. During the 20th century, an estimated 76% of its heaths and grasslands were converted into cropland and commercial forests. The remaining heaths are fragmented and require ongoing management to guarantee the open, nutrient-poor conditions required by so many Breckland species.

## Biodiversity boon

- Field wormwood: Habitat restoration across 3 sites. 35 plants re-introduced at 5 sites. Threefold increase of plant at London Road Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- Prostrate perennial knawel: Habitat restoration across 6 sites. 75 plants re-introduced at 4 sites – all surviving well.
- Wormwood moonshiner beetle: Numbers found at College Heath Road went from 72 to 218 – the highest-ever recorded in the UK. Number of known locations from 1 to 3.
- Five-banded tailed digger wasp: Now recorded in 9 woodland 'highways'. It was formerly found in just 2.
- European rabbit: Evidence of rabbit activity seen in significantly

higher numbers. 91% of brush piles showed paw scrapes. 41% contained burrows. Even when burrows did not form, brush piles helped expand the range of rabbit activity.