

New powers to tackle cruel puppy smuggling move step closer

New plans to crack down on puppy smuggling and ban the import of dogs with cropped ears or docked tails have been set out by the UK Government today.

The new powers, which also include raising the minimum age for importing a puppy from 15 weeks to six months and banning the import of heavily pregnant dogs to help protect puppy and mother welfare, are aimed at safeguarding the welfare of the thousands of puppies and dogs that come into Great Britain from overseas each year.

More than 66,000 dogs were commercially imported into the UK last year according to Animal and Plant Health Agency figures. However, evidence shows a recent rise in low-welfare imports and smuggling activity, with border authorities seeing around a 260% increase in the number of young puppies being intercepted for not meeting the UK's pet import rules – from 324 in 2019 to 843 in 2020.

The proposals are part of a raft of measures included in [an eight-week GB-wide consultation](#) which seeks views from the public and stakeholders on government proposals to tackle puppy smuggling and low-welfare imports by unscrupulous breeders and traders.

In addition, the consultation asks the public and stakeholders for views on new penalties for breaching these rules, changes to the detention and rehoming process and whether the proposals should be extended to cover cats and ferrets.

Launching the consultation, Animal Welfare Minister Lord Zac Goldsmith said:

Puppy smuggling is a grim trade, and we are determined to clamp down on it.

Raising the minimum import age for puppies will help protect thousands of animals that are brought into the country each year and stop criminals looking to profit from the rise in demand for pets.

We already have one of the toughest pet travel border checking regimes in the world and as an independent nation outside the EU we are going even further by preventing anyone from bringing in dogs which have undergone inhumane procedures such as ear cropping or tail docking.

These new measures build on our plans to raise animal welfare standards across the board as part of our Action Plan for Animal

Welfare.

RSPCA chief executive Chris Sherwood said:

In recent years we've seen a huge increase in the number of dogs being commercially imported into the UK as well as the number of dogs being reported for having undergone mutilated procedures such as cropped ears.

These are major dog welfare issues that need addressing as a matter of urgency in order to protect dogs from unnecessary suffering and to protect the public from falling victim to criminals who are trying to cash in on these dogs' value.

We're really pleased that the Government – which pledged to tackle these issues among many others in its Action Plan for Animal Welfare – is launching this consultation and we hope that these new measures will be implemented efficiently so that we can crackdown on the illegal dog trade once and for all.

Owen Sharp, Chief Executive of Dogs Trust said:

We are delighted that today's consultation could bring us one step closer to ending the abhorrent puppy smuggling trade. Over the last six years, Dogs Trust has spearheaded the campaign to crack down on puppy smuggling, after our first undercover investigation in 2014 exposed widespread abuse of the Pet Travel Scheme by unscrupulous dealers, bringing in puppies for sale.

Since setting up our Puppy Pilot in 2015 we have cared for more than 2000 puppies which were seized at UK borders, often in horrendous conditions. We have seen puppies as young as 4 weeks old being smuggled into the country and dogs with open wounds from ear cropping as well as heavily pregnant dogs close to giving birth.

We are pleased that the consultation has set out proposals to tackle these issues and hope it results in tougher penalties for these crimes, as currently only a handful of cases have ever been prosecuted and the existing penalties are sadly no deterrent. We will continue to work closely with the Government to be the voice for dogs and put forward our recommendations to ensure the proposed legislation effects real change.

Media vet, animal welfare campaigner, and founder of the Lucy's Law and #BanPuppyImports campaigns, Dr Marc Abraham OBE says:

This important Government consultation is hugely welcome and will hopefully bring us another step closer to ending widespread cruelty to puppies and their parents. For decades, both the legal and illegal importation of young puppies has enabled and encouraged low-welfare breeding practices and dog exploitation across Europe, with puppies often separated from their mothers too early, then sent long distances often riddled with all kinds of disease, straight to their unsuspecting new owners in the UK.

By introducing these positive dog welfare proposals we can make significant progress in the fight against these cruel practices. I would like to thank the UK Government for listening to the evidence presented by campaigners and hope we can secure these positive changes needed to protect the puppies, their parents, and the British dog-owning public.

Puppies that are imported too young face a significantly higher risk of developing illnesses or even death.

Raising the minimum age for bringing puppies in to the UK will therefore ensure that they are not separated from their mothers too early and will allow them to develop further ahead of being taken on potentially long and stressful journeys which can have a lasting impact on their temperament and behaviour.

The RSPCA has also [recently reported](#) a 620% rise in reports of dogs found to have had their ears cropped, covering from 2015 to 2020. Ear cropping is a painful process where a dog's outer ears are surgically altered or removed altogether to make them look more aggressive. The surgical procedure, which has been illegal in this country since 2006, can hinder their ability to communicate with other dogs and their owners.

The majority of these dogs are suspected to have undergone the procedure overseas and under the new rules set out in the consultation launched today they would be banned from entering the country.

Last year the Dogs Trust [warned the public](#) about the risk of buying dogs online after rescuing dozens of puppies that were illegally imported into the country. Victims of this cruel trade included a group of six underage puppies seized at Dover port after being found covered in sticky oil and suffering from diarrhoea. The puppies had been illegally imported from Romania and were travelling in the back of a van for more than 24 hours. They had to be shaved to remove the oil from their fur.

In September 2020, four beagle puppies were also found in the back of an abandoned vehicle in Greater London. At eight weeks old, they weighed just two kilograms each and were very hungry and dehydrated. They are believed to have been illegally imported from the Republic of Ireland, to be sold onto prospective buyers in the UK. After spending three weeks in the care of the Dogs Trust, they went on to loving new homes.

The proposals launched today build on the UK Government's commitment to end the cruel practice of puppy smuggling and low welfare imports, as set out in the Government's [Action Plan for Animal Welfare](#) and [Animal Welfare \(Kept Animals\) Bill](#). The responses to the consultation will inform future government policy in this area, helping to [deliver a manifesto commitment](#) made in 2019.

The consultation can be found [here](#).

[Proposals to help people build their own homes welcomed by Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick](#)

- Richard Bacon MP's report, commissioned by the Prime Minister, addresses some of the barriers to building your own home.
- Housing Secretary 'warmly welcomes' report as government considers options to make building your own home easier and more affordable, including the 'Help to Build' scheme.
- Potential to deliver 30-40,000 custom and self-build homes a year, supporting thousands of jobs.

Proposals to help more people build their own homes have been 'warmly welcomed' by the Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP (21 August 2021).

Richard Bacon MP's [review of Custom and Self Build](#), commissioned by the Prime Minister, finds huge potential in the sector which could deliver 30-40,000 more homes every year, and recommends a major-scaling up of self-built homes to boost the overall housing supply. This will see homes that can be built in weeks that are better designed, built to the highest environmental standards and with cheaper household bills.

The report was commissioned to improve the housebuilding industry by giving customers more choice, and to make home building a mainstream, realistic and affordable option for people across the country.

The government has already committed £150 million for the Help to Build scheme which will allow home builders to borrow money with lower deposits.

The government is also providing funding for local councils to create high quality serviced plots that are ready to go, stepping up self and custom build housing projects across the UK.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

As we build back better we want to help more people build their own home, making it an option for thousands who've not considered it or ruled it out before. This will help get more people on to the housing ladder, ensure homes suit people's needs whilst providing an important boost to small builders and businesses too.

I warmly welcome Richard Bacon's report which matches our ambitions for the custom and self-build sector. We will consider it fully and respond to the recommendations in due course.

The launch of the Help to Build equity loan scheme will be a game-changer to the self and custom build market and will allow individuals to borrow with lower deposit mortgages which will go towards the design and build of their new home.

The Bacon Review puts forward 6 recommendations:

- **A greater role for Homes England**, with the creation of a new Custom and Self Build Housing Delivery Unit supporting the creation of serviced plots on small and large sites and delivery at scale.
- **Raise awareness and show by 'doing'**, including with a custom and self build 'Show Park' and a more robust approach to legislation.
- **Support community, diversity and levelling up** – and crucially by reigniting the Community Housing Fund and creating more opportunities for communities to build.
- **Promote greener homes and increased use of Modern Methods of Manufacturing (MMC)** – custom and self build is a leading innovator in these areas, and could be used to signpost the future for government's MMC and Net Zero Housing ambitions.
- **Align custom and self build changes with planning reforms** – in particular through maximising opportunities for permissioned land for custom and self build, across all tenures.
- **Iron out tax issues** to create a level playing field between this type of homes and speculatively built homes.

Richard Bacon MP said:

We need to build more and better new homes. Custom and self-build can help achieve this, by putting customers and their choices back at the heart of the process. When customers come first, we will see more homes built – that are better designed, better built, greener and which cost less to run – and which are warmly welcomed by their communities. This review sets out a route map for how we can achieve this much needed change.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will publish more detail on Help to Build shortly followed by its official response to the Bacon Review in the Autumn, including reviewing options on how best to support Custom and Self-build (CSB) housebuilding.

The government's reforms to the planning system will help support the CSB industry by streamlining and modernising the planning process, bringing a new focus to design and sustainability and ensuring more land is available for development where it is needed.

Help to Build

The 'Help to Build' scheme will ensure that self and custom home building can become a realistic option to get onto the housing ladder through lower deposit mortgages.

Lowering the required deposit will free up capital, so people can build the home that they want and need whether it's a commissioned, made to order home, or a new design from scratch. The scheme will provide an equity loan on the completed home, similar to the Help to Buy scheme.

Made to order homes allow people to customise the home they want based on existing designs. This could include more office space, or a particular design to support a family's requirements including for disabled or older people.

The scheme is part of the government's wider [Plan for Jobs](#) as the new plans will also benefit small building firms. SME builders account for 1 in 10 new homes and the scheme will help scale up the number of self and custom build homes built every year.

Right to Build taskforce

The Right To Build Task Force provides support to local authorities on how to take forward self and custom build and deliver their duties under the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding legislation, e.g. through advising how self and custom homes can be included in local plans and strategic sites.

The Task Force is a not-for-profit organisation and was previously funded through the Nationwide Foundation. The government has provided £320,000 of funding for the Task Force since 2019/20.

[PM call with Prime Minister Mark](#)

[Rutte: 20 August 2021](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke with the Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte.



The Prime Minister spoke to Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte this afternoon about the situation in Afghanistan.

They agreed to continue working together, alongside other NATO allies, on the immediate effort to evacuate our nationals and former staff from Afghanistan.

The Prime Minister outlined his five-point plan for addressing the risk of humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. The leaders agreed the international community must work together to resettle Afghan refugees and increase humanitarian aid to the region.

They also agreed that any recognition of a new Afghan Government should happen on a coordinated, rather than unilateral, basis.

Published 20 August 2021

[Extra healthcare and housing support for those arriving from Afghanistan](#)

- First dose of COVID-19 vaccine will be offered to everyone arriving from Afghanistan
- Rapid access to support for mental wellbeing

Additional healthcare provision, access to COVID-19 vaccinations and funding for housing will be provided to support Afghans coming to the UK via the Afghanistan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme.

Councils in England, Scotland and Wales will have access to a share of £5 million to help them provide the necessary housing and support to Afghans who have worked for this country in Afghanistan, but who now face threats of persecution or worse.

The Afghan LES (Locally Employed Staff) Housing Costs Fund will provide a top up to help councils meet the costs of renting properties for those that need it, including larger homes for families. This will help give councils the

security to make a firm offer of support to take people into their communities and help them build a new life.

So far the UK has secured the evacuation of 1,615 people since Saturday, including 399 British Nationals and their dependants, 320 embassy staff, and 402 Afghan nationals under ARAP. The UK is doubling the amount of humanitarian aid to the region, up to £286 million with immediate effect, and our new bespoke resettlement scheme will be one of the most generous in British history, set to relocate up to 20,000 vulnerable Afghans.

As President of the G7 the UK is working to unite the international community behind a clear plan for dealing with this regime and we are asking our international partners to match our commitments and work with us to offer a lifeline to Afghanistan's most vulnerable people.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Our immediate focus is to evacuate the Afghans who risked their lives supporting us over the past twenty years and to whom we owe so much.

We are proud to bring them to the UK, and this additional support will help make sure that those arriving from Afghanistan receive the housing and healthcare that they need as they start to build a new life here.

We will do everything we can in the days, weeks and months ahead to protect the most vulnerable, which is why we're doubling our humanitarian aid to the region and setting up a new bespoke resettlement scheme to give up to 20,000 of those most in need of refuge here in the UK.

Additional healthcare provision has also been put in place. All those who have fled Afghanistan are also being offered the COVID-19 vaccine on arrival, if they haven't received one already, and will be issued with a vaccine card.

New vaccination points will also be set up at each managed quarantine hotel and those arriving will be invited to get their jab after they have received a negative Day 2 PCR test. Enhanced healthcare support to Afghan refugees will also include:

- Doubling our medical provision to ensure everyone can access medical support 24/7;
- Providing rapid access to support for mental well-being in the wake of experiencing trauma;
- Reuniting family members who arrive on different flights where possible;
- Allowing people to stay in large family groups in quarantine for comfort

and support;

- Providing regular information check-ins with local services to prepare refugees for resettlement with additional translators to support engagement with the services being provided;
- Providing toys to keep children entertained; and
- Giving appropriate clothes for people who may have left Afghanistan with very little.

This is on top of the robust health and wellbeing support already in place at managed quarantine hotels. As part of existing support, those entering quarantine hotels from Afghanistan will also have access to:

- Medical support to ensure all evacuees undergo a health check;
- 24/7 on-site medical team;
- Care links to local care providers where needed;
- Access to both female and male health professionals; and
- Daily health and wellbeing checks, either through doctors safely visiting hotel rooms or through a guest telephone calling system, with all call handlers speaking both Pushto and Dari.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

In response to this unfolding tragedy, we are committed to ensuring those who are being resettled here in the UK under our Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy have our full support.

As Health Secretary, my focus is on the health and wellbeing of families from the moment they touch down in the UK. I was very pleased today to be able to meet one such family who arrived recently and learn from their experience of the healthcare we have provided so far.

We are boosting our health and wellbeing services to evacuees during their 10 day quarantine. This includes giving everyone a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, if they have not already received one, doubling our medical provision to ensure everyone can access support round the clock and reuniting families who arrive on different flights where we can.

Local Government Secretary Robert Jenrick said:

There is already an enormous effort underway to support those arriving from Afghanistan with close to a third of councils already stepping up to support new arrivals.

However, we urgently need more offers of support to welcome Afghan families who have stood shoulder to shoulder with the UK, serving our troops and our country so bravely in recent years.

With this extra support in place, I'm calling on all councils who have not yet come forward, to contact us with a firm offer of support to help our Afghan friends and their families as they build a new life in safety here.

The ARAP scheme launched on 01 April 2021. Under the scheme, any current or former Locally Employed Staff who worked in Afghanistan for the UK Embassy assessed to be at serious risk of threat to life are offered priority relocation to the UK regardless of their employment status, rank or role, or length of time served.

Thanks to the efforts of over a quarter of councils across the UK and vital delivery partners, hundreds of Afghan nationals who have worked alongside British forces and diplomats in Afghanistan have already been welcomed by councils across the country.

This work is happening at pace and, with many more Afghan families set to arrive, there is still more to do to ensure we are supporting new arrivals as best we can.

Earlier this week, the government set out its ambition for the new Afghanistan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme – a new plan to resettle 5,000 Afghan nationals in its first year, with priority given to those most in need due to the current crisis – including women and girls, and religious and other minorities, who are most at risk of human rights abuses and dehumanising treatment.

This resettlement scheme will be kept under further review for future years, with up to a total of 20,000 people potentially eligible in the long-term. The ambition to provide protection to thousands of people fleeing Afghanistan and the complex picture on the ground means there will be significant challenges in delivering the scheme, but the government is committed to doing all it can for those who need our support and is working at great speed to address these obstacles.

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