

Plans announced to phase out lead ammunition in bid to protect wildlife

- Government sets out the restriction work to be carried out in the first year of UK REACH, the UK's new chemical regime
- Evidence shows lead ammunition harms the environment, wildlife and people
- Consultation will seek public's views on restriction proposals

Lead ammunition could be phased out under government plans to help protect wildlife and nature, Environment Minister Rebecca Pow announced today [23 March].

A large volume of lead ammunition is discharged every year over the countryside, causing harm to the environment, wildlife and people. The government is now considering a ban under the UK's new chemical regulation system – [UK REACH](#)– and has requested an official review of the evidence to begin today with a public consultation in due course.

Research by the [Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust](#) shows that between 50,000 to 100,000 wildfowl die in the UK each year due ingesting lead from used pellets. Despite being highly toxic, wildfowl often mistake the pellets for food. A further 200,000 to 400,000 birds suffer welfare or health impacts, and animals that predate on wildfowl can also suffer.

Lead ammunition can also find its way into the wider environment and the food chain, posing a risk to people if they eat contaminated game birds. Studies have also found that lead poisoning caused lowered immune systems in wild birds, potentially aiding the spread of diseases such as avian influenza (bird flu).

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow said:

Addressing the impacts of lead ammunition will mark a significant step forward in helping to protect wildlife, people, and the environment.

This is a welcome development for our new chemicals framework, and will help ensure a sustainable relationship between shooting and conservation.

The announcement today has been welcomed by environmental organisations.

Dr Julia Newth, Ecosystem Health & Social Dimensions Manager at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), said:

Conservationists, including WWT, shooting organisations and game

meat retailers have recognised the toxic risks from lead ammunition to people and the environment. Regulation of its use in all shooting, wherever this may happen, is very much needed as soon as possible to protect human and animal health and to enable us to move towards a greener and safer future.

Shooting organisations are also supportive of transitioning away from the use of lead ammunition and are working with government to bring this about.

The Environment Agency, together with the Health and Safety Executive, will now start a two-year process to review the evidence, conduct a public consultation and propose options for restrictions.

Now we have left the EU we are able to make our own laws. UK REACH allows decisions to be made on the regulation of chemicals based on the best available scientific evidence, ensuring chemicals remain safely used and managed.

Notes to editors:

- The use of lead ammunition in England is restricted by the Environmental Protection (Restriction on the use of Lead Ammunition) (England) Regulations 1999. (Similar existing regulations apply in Wales with different definitions adopted in Scotland and Northern Ireland), These Regulations prohibit the use of lead ammunition on all foreshores in England, in or over specified SSSIs (predominately wetlands) and for the shooting of all ducks and geese, coot and moorhen. The plans announced today will consider phasing out the use of lead ammunition across all environments across England, Scotland and Wales.
- The Government is also initiating a restriction on substances with certain hazards in tattoo inks and permanent make-up.

Liz Truss announces creation of four major new Trade and Investment Hubs across the UK

Four major new trade and investment hubs will be established in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the North-East of England to boost trade and investment and level-up the country, the International Trade Secretary will announce today (23 March 2021).

The trade hubs in Edinburgh, Cardiff, Belfast and a new second major DIT site in Darlington, will be established as part of a new strategy to boost exports and bring the benefits of the government's global trade policy to the whole

of the UK, including benefits from future free trade agreements with the US, Australia, New Zealand and CPTPP.

They will mean exporters have a direct feed into UK trade policy, and can better take advantage of opportunities in fast-growing markets like the Indo-Pacific region. The trade hubs will also create a critical link between the regions and the resources of the Office For Investment – a joint initiative with the Prime Minister’s Office – to channel investment money into every UK nation and region.

The trade hubs will be home to teams of export and investment specialists, who can provide businesses with expert support and advice to help them:

- maximise their export potential and boost their trade in new markets overseas
- better access major trade markets like India, the US and Japan
- feed directly into DIT’s free trade agreements programme

The launch of the trade hubs marks the start of a major export drive, which will see DIT focussed on promoting British exports from all parts of the UK, to help level up the country, build back better, and support a resilient economy as outlined in the government’s Integrated Review.

Earlier this month government-led research showed exports support 6.5m jobs across the UK, 74% of which are outside London. The research estimates jobs directly and indirectly supported by exports pay around 7% higher than the national median, with Office for National Statistics estimating that goods exporting businesses are also 21% more productive.

The new trade hubs will also support the launch of high-profile export campaigns due to launch later this year, that will seek to maximise export potential and boost UK enterprise in global markets, following the recent launch of the food and drink export campaign. Last year, goods exports from the North of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland were £98.4bn.

I’m determined to use UK trade policy to benefit every part of the UK. These Trade and Investment Hubs will help this country to an export and jobs-led recovery.

They will mean we can channel investment into all corners of the country, and that exporters – whether they’re selling Scotch beef, Welsh Lamb or cars made in the North of England – have access to the expertise they need to sell into the fastest growing markets.

550 staff are expected to be present in the hubs by 2025, with an ambition to increase this to 750 staff by 2030. An existing DIT Hub in Edinburgh announced in September last year, will see a significant increase in headcount following its relaunch today.

Plans submitted for a new 'aquagreen' to reduce flooding in east Hull

A public consultation was launched in September 2020 on proposals for a versatile green space, south of the old Bransholme Dairy Farm, that will store excess water during a flood and then slowly release it back into the drainage system after the peak of the flood has passed.

Now that feedback from the community and partners has been considered, plans have been revised and submitted to Hull City Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council for approval.

Homes in North Carr and Sutton are currently at risk of flooding from water in the Holderness and Sutton Cross drains after heavy rain. The Holderness Drain is a man-made river channel. When it becomes full, water flows into Sutton Cross Drain, overwhelming the local drainage system and increasing the risk of flooding for homes in the area. This area almost flooded in November 2019 when other parts of Hull were hit.

If approved, the 'aquagreen' will be the second phase of the £28.5m Holderness Drain Flood Alleviation Scheme, following construction of the new East Hull Pumping Station, which started earlier last year.

Andrew Barron, Environment Agency flood risk advisor for Hull, said:

Last year's consultation was a really useful opportunity to talk to the community to get their local knowledge to help influence and improve our proposals for Castlehill.

We are now in a position to submit our final plans for this scheme, which will significantly reduce the likelihood of flooding for properties in the North Carr and Sutton areas of Hull by storing flood water in the aquagreen.

Under normal weather conditions, the site will not hold water which gives us an ideal opportunity to create a more attractive green space that people can enjoy spending time in.

Councillor Mike Thompson, portfolio holder for Neighbourhoods, Community and the Environment at Hull City Council, said:

It is exciting and I'm proud to see this phase of the Holderness Drain FAS progressing to the next stage. The scheme offers not just a reduction in flood risk, but also helps the city adapt to the increasing challenges of climate change and provides more

reassurance to families.

The scheme will also provide local people with more opportunities for walking and enjoying the outdoor environment, an element that has become so important to us all in the last year, and the value this brings in terms of our health and wellbeing shows that we need to take greater care of our natural environment.

Councillor Chris Matthews, portfolio holder for strategic property and infrastructure at East Riding of Yorkshire Council, said:

Any scheme which reduces the risk of flooding and helps to take on the challenges of climate change can only be a good thing for the East Riding and our residents.

The East Riding already has a lot of green areas which allow for outdoor exercise and socialising so we very much would welcome the opportunity to step forward with the 'aquagreen' project.

James Leeming, Senior Project Manager at Highways England, said:

This is an important step forward for the 'aquagreen' project. Keeping our roads flowing freely and protecting the communities who live alongside them is vitally important. That's why we are working closely with our partners along the A63 route and providing £5 million towards the continued success of the Holderness Drain Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Stephen Parnaby OBE, Chair of the Humber LEP, said:

We are thrilled this important project to help protect homes and businesses from the risk of flooding in Hull and East Yorkshire is progressing and plans have now been submitted. We are pleased to support the Castlehill Aquagreen through our allocation of the Local Growth Fund.

The construction of the 'aquagreen' will involve digging an extra drain, east of Sutton Cross Drain, building a new embankment beside it and digging a long wide ditch at the southern end of the site to increase the capacity for temporarily storing water during a flood.

Once a flood is over, most of the water will drain away although the site is designed to remain wet in some areas. As part of the plans, several low spots will be raised on both sides of the Holderness Drain to reduce the risk of flood water spilling out onto the land next to the drain.

Proposals for the site also include:

- improving access and creating a network of paths and bridleways
- creating a range of different habitats for wildlife including woodland, hay meadow, scrubland, reed beds and small ponds
- offering better protection for the Castle Hill monument and installing information boards about its history

Findings from the public consultation were analysed and resulted in several changes to the scheme. A proposed footbridge between Bransholme Estate and the Castlehill site has been removed due to concerns raised during the consultation around security and more barriers have been included in the scheme to prevent motorbikes gaining access to the site.

This partnership scheme, led by the Environment Agency and supported by Hull City Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Highways England and the Humber Local Enterprise Partnership's Local Growth Fund Programme, will better protect around 1,000 properties and help to provide a long-term, more sustainable solution to the problem of flooding in this area. The Humber Local Enterprise Partnership secured £2.14 million towards the project through the Local Growth Fund as part of the Government's commitment to the Northern Powerhouse.

[The plans are available online to view and comment on.](#)

You can read a more detailed description of the changes to the plans in the full report, which can be [downloaded from the Holderness Drain website.](#)

If residents have any questions they can email the project team at: HoldernessdrainFAS@environment-agency.gov.uk

[Defence Secretary oral statement on the Defence Command Paper](#)

As a young officer, thirty years ago almost to the day, I was summoned to the drill square to have read aloud key decisions from the government's defence review, 'Options For Change'.

We did not know it then but the world was set for massive change. The fall of the Soviet Union, the rise of China, the global impact of the internet and emergence of Al Qaeda were some way off, which meant no one was really prepared for what happened when they did.

They were all some way off and yet no one was really prepared for what happened when they did.

I was part of an Army that, on paper, fielded three armoured divisions in Germany, but in reality could muster much less – it was, in truth, a hollow force.

That is why – while I know some colleagues would rather play top trumps with our force numbers – there is no point boasting about numbers of regiments when you send them to war in Snatch Land Rovers, or simply counting the number of tanks when our adversaries are developing ways to defeat them.

That is why we have put at the heart of the Defence Command Paper the mission to seek out and to understand future threats, and to invest in the capabilities needed so that we can defeat them.

Because in defence it is too tempting to use the shield of sentimentality to protect previously battle-winning but now outdated capabilities. Such sentimentality, when coupled with over-ambition and under-resourcing leads to even harder consequences down the line. It risks the lives of our people, who are truly our finest asset.

It would, of course, similarly endanger our people if we simply wielded a sword of cuts, slicing away the battle-proven on the promise of novelty, without regard for what is left behind. Old capabilities are not necessarily redundant, just as new technologies are not always relevant – we must employ both ‘sword’ and ‘shield’.

Because those of us in government charged to defend the country have a duty to protect new domains, as well as continuing investment in the traditional ones, but always adapting to the threat.

History shows us, time and time again, that failing to do so risks irrelevance and defeat. As the threat changes we must change with it, remaining clear-eyed about what capabilities we retire, why we are doing things, and how they will be replaced.

The Prime Minister’s vision for the UK in 2030 sees a stronger, more secure, prosperous and resilient Union, better equipped for a more competitive age, as a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation with a global perspective. To become so requires Britain’s soft and hard power to be better integrated.

In this more competitive age, a ‘Global Britain’ has no choice but to step up, ready to take on the challenges and shape the opportunities of the years ahead, alongside our allies and friends. Let us be clear, the benefits and institutions of multilateralism, to which we have all become so accustomed, are an extension not an alternative for our shared leadership and our hard power.

UK diplomacy should work hand in hand with the UK Armed Forces abroad. We will invest in our defence diplomacy network in order to strengthen the influence we can bring to bear.

And at this point I wish to pay tribute to all our civil servants, who’s professionalism and dedication is every bit as vital to UK security as all the other components in that enterprise.

Likewise, in the past we have been too tempted to fund equipment at the expense of our service personnel's lived experience. That is why over the next four years we will spend £1.5-billion on improving Single Living Accommodation and £1.4-billion on Wrap Around Childcare over the decade. _

The Government's commitment to spending £188-billion on defence over the coming four years – an increase of £24-billion or fourteen per cent – is an investment in the Prime Minister's vision of security and prosperity in 2030.

Previous reviews have been over-ambitious and under-funded, leaving forces that were overstretched and under-equipped.

This increased funding offers defence an exciting opportunity to turn our current forces into credible ones, modernising for the threats of the 2020s and beyond, and contributing to national prosperity in the process.

It marks a shift from mass mobilisation to information age speed, readiness and relevance for confronting the threats of the future.

These principles will guide our doctrine and force development.

The Integrated Operating Concept, published last year, recognises that changes in the information and political environments now impact not just the context but conduct of military operations.

The notion of war and peace as binary states has given way to a continuum of conflict, requiring us to prepare our forces for more persistent global engagement and constant campaigning – moving seamlessly from operating to war fighting if that is required.

The UK Armed Forces – working with the rest of government – must think and act differently. They will no longer be held as a force of last resort, but become more present and active force around the world.

Our forces will still be able to warfight as their primary function, but they will also have a role to play before and after what we traditionally consider 'war'; whether that is supporting humanitarian projects, conflict prevention and stabilisation, or UN peacekeeping.

But technological proliferation, use of proxies, and adversaries' operating below the threshold of open conflict means that the United Kingdom must also play a role in countering such aggressive acts. So the steps to sustaining UK leadership in defence must start with ensuring we are a credible and truly threat-oriented organisation, and we must do so in conjunction with our Allies and friends.

These reforms today will ensure that we continue to meet our NATO commitments on land and enhance our contributions at sea.

As the second biggest spender in NATO and a major contributor across all five domains, we have a responsibility to support the Alliance's own transformation for this more competitive age.

So, today I am setting out in this Defence Command Paper the threats we are facing, our operating concept for countering them, and the investments in our forces that are required to deliver the nation's defences.

That threat demands that we make the following investments and adjustments to the services.

The Royal Navy

- we have also been a maritime nation for many many centuries and it is vital that we have a navy that is both global and powerful.
- the Royal Navy – because of our investment in the Type 26, Type 31, and Type 32 – will by the start of the next decade have over twenty Frigates and Destroyers.
- we will also commission a new Multi-Role Ocean Surveillance Ship which will protect the integrity of the UK's Maritime Zones and undersea Critical National Infrastructure.
- we will deploy new automated mine hunting systems, which will replace the Sandown and Hunt classes as they retire through the decade.
- the interim Surface to Surface Guided Weapon, will replace the Harpoon missile and we will upgrade the Air Defence weapon systems on our Type 45s to better protect them from new threats.
- we will invest further to improve the availability of our submarine fleet and start development of the next generation of subsea systems for the 2040s.
- the Royal Marines will develop from being amphibious infantry held at readiness, to a forward-based, highly capable maritime 'Future Commando Force', further enabled by the conversion of a Bay Class landing ship to enable Littoral Strike.

British Army

Our land forces have been, for too long, deprived of investment and that is why over the next four years we will spend £23-billion on their modernisation.

- the British Army will reorganise into seven brigade combat teams, two heavy, one deep strike, one air manoeuvre, and two light, plus a Combat Aviation Brigade.

- in addition, a newly formed Security Force Assistance Brigade will provide the skills and capabilities to build the capacity of partner nations.
- in recognition of the growing demand for enhanced assistance and our commitment to delivering resilience to those partners we will establish an Army Special Operations Brigade built around the four battalions of the new Ranger Regiment. This new regiment will be seeded from 1 SCOTS, 2 PWRR, 2 LANCS, and 4 RIFLES.
- our adversaries set a premium on rapid deployability, so we will enhance the existing 16 Air Assault Brigade with an additional infantry unit, supported by upgraded Apache Attack Helicopters. Together they will create a Global Response Force for both crisis response and warfighting.
- the 3rd Division will remain the heart of our warfighting capability, leading in NATO with two modernised heavy brigades. In order to ensure we are more lethal and better protected they will be built around a modern armoured nucleus of 148 upgraded 'Challenger 3' tanks, AJAX armoured reconnaissance vehicles, and the accelerated introduction of Boxer armoured personnel carriers.
- as I have repeatedly said, recent lessons from conflict in Libya, Syria and the Caucuses have shown the vulnerability of armour. So we will increase both manning and investment in Electronic Warfare regiments, Air Defence, and Uncrewed Aerial Surveillance systems, all complemented by offensive cyber capabilities.
- the Army's increased deployability and technological advantage will mean that greater effect can be delivered by fewer people. I have therefore taken the decision to reduce the size of the Army from today's current strength of 76,500 trade trained personnel to 72,500 by 2025. The Army has not been at its established strength of 82,000 since the middle of the last decade.
- these changes will not require redundancies and we wish to build on the work already done on utilising our reserves to make sure the whole force is better integrated and more productive.
- there will be no loss of cap badges. As I have said earlier the new structures will require fewer units. And therefore the 2nd Battalion the Mercian Regiment will be amalgamated with their 1st Battalion to form a new Boxer-mounted battalion.
- to administer the new infantry we will reorganise the regiments to sit

in four infantry divisions.

- each will comprise of a more balanced number of battalions and give the men and women serving in them a wider range of choices and opportunities in pursuing their careers and specialties.
- in order to ensure that there is a balanced allocation of recruits we will introduce 'Intelligent Recruiting' for the infantry and each division of infantry will initially feed the four new Ranger battalions.
- the final details of these administrative divisions, along with the wider Army restructuring, will be announced before the summer and no major unit deletions will be required.

Royal Air Force

- today's Royal Air Force is now deploying world-leading capabilities, P8, Rivet Joint, A400M and the latest Typhoons. The F35 – the world's most capable combat aircraft – is now being deployed to frontline squadrons. In recognition of its battle winning capabilities we will commit to grow the fleet beyond 48 aircraft.
- the E3D Sentry, two generations behind its contemporaries, will be replaced by a more capable fleet of three E7 Wedgetail in 2023. These will be based at RAF Lossiemouth, transforming the UK Airborne Early Warning and Control capabilities, as well as contributing to NATO.
- as the transport fleet improves availability we will retire the C130-J Hercules in 2023, after 24 years of service. Twenty-two A400Ms, alongside the C17s, will provide a more capable and flexible transport fleet.
- our counter terrorism operations are currently supported by nine Reaper RPAS ('drones') which will be replaced by Protectors by 2024. These new platforms will provide the enhanced strategic ISR and strike capabilities that are so vital for all our forces.
- all forces evolve and the increasingly competitive and complex air environment means we must set the foundations now for our sixth-generation of fighter.
- the Typhoon has been a tremendous success for the British aerospace industry and we will seek to repeat that with £2-billion of investment in the Future Combat Air System over the next four years, alongside

further development of the LANCA UCAV system. We will continue to seek further international collaboration.

- all services recognise the importance of Unmanned Aerial Systems, which is why we will also develop combat drone swarm technologies.
- but in order to ensure our current platforms have the necessary protection and lethality we will also upgrade the Typhoon radar and introduce Spear Cap 3 deep strike capabilities.

UK Strategic Command

- the lessons of current conflict demonstrate that however capable individual forces may be they are vulnerable without integration.
- UK Strategic Command will, therefore, invest £1.5-billion over the next decade to build and sustain a 'digital backbone' to share and exploit vast amounts of data, through the cloud and secure networks.
- to ensure our workforce are able to exploit new domains and enhance productivity the Command will invest in synthetics and simulation, providing a step change in our training.
- the National Cyber Force will lie at the heart of defence and GCHQ's offensive cyber capability and will be based in the North West of England.
- keeping ourselves informed of the threat and ahead of our rivals means that Defence Intelligence will be at the heart of our enterprise. We will exploit a wider network of advanced surveillance platforms, all classifications of data, and enhanced analysis using Artificial Intelligence.
- strategic Command will partner, alongside the RAF, to deliver a step-change in our space capabilities. From next year we will start delivering a UK built Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance satellite constellation.

Space is just one area in which the MOD will prioritise more than £6.6-billion of research, development, and experimentation over the next four years.

These investments in our future battle-winning capabilities will be guided by the Science and Technology Strategy of 2020 and a new Defence and Security

Industrial Strategy, published tomorrow.

Our special forces are world leading. We are committed to investing in their cutting-edge capabilities to ensure they retain their excellence in counter-terrorism, while becoming increasingly capable of also countering hostile state activity.

To conclude, if this Defence Command Paper is anything it is an honest assessment of what we can do and what we will do.

We will ensure defence is threat-focused, modernised, and financially sustainable, ready to confront future challenges, seize new opportunities for Global Britain and lay the foundations of a more secure and prosperous United Kingdom.

We will, for the first time in decades, match genuine money to credible ambitions. We will retire platforms to make way for new systems and approaches.

And we will invest in that most precious commodity of all – the people of our armed forces.

To serve my country as a soldier was one of the greatest privileges of my life: 'serving to lead', contributing to keeping this country safe, upholding our values, and defending those who could not defend themselves.

Putting yourself in harm's way in the service of your country is something that fortunately few of us are ever required to do.

But we all have a duty to ensure that those who do so on our behalves are as well prepared and equipped as possible.

So the success of this Defence Command Paper should not be judged on the sophistication of its words, but the implementation of its reforms.

And, ultimately, on the delivery of its capabilities into the hands of the men and women of our armed forces.

It is they who keep us safe and will continue to do so in the years ahead. It is to them, their families, and all those across defence that we owe it to make this policy into reality.

The work to do so has only just begun.

[UN Human Rights Council 46: Item 10](#)

(Technical Assistance and Capacity)

General Debate

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