

52 illegal nets and traps seized during a pandemic

In just nine months, from March 2020 to December 2020, 52 illegal fishing traps and nets were retrieved.

26 were found in Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire, 14 in Suffolk and Essex, and 12 in Norfolk.

These figures show an increase compared to 2019 where a total of 30 traps were seized across East Anglia over the course of the whole year.

The illegal instruments trap eels, crayfish, water voles, otters and coarse fish. They are a significant risk to wildlife and fish stocks.

Ian Hirst, Fisheries Team Leader for Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire said:

Despite Covid-19 our work to protect wildlife and the environment has remained, while observing social distancing rules.

We would like to thank the members of the public who reported these devices to our incident hotline number 0800 80 70 60.

Also, a special thank you to the agencies and river groups who have helped us recover some of the illegal nets and traps.

We urge the public to report all sightings of these instruments to our incident hotline number so we can investigate.

Lesley Robertson, Enforcement Team Leader for Essex, Norfolk & Suffolk said:

Traps and nets can often be seen from the river bank, and identified by a rope tied to the bankside.

We are very grateful to those who report these illegal traps. Without that information, illegal traps and nets might still be there causing damage to wildlife.

We encourage the public to keep their eyes peeled for any

suspicious fishing activities and to call us on our incident hotline 0800 807060.

Our officers are regularly out patrolling the river banks and will not hesitate to take enforcement action.

There are strict rules when it comes to trapping or fishing for crayfish, eels, salmon, sea trout, lamprey and smelt.

You would need an Environment Agency licence to do so – more details here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/permission-to-trap-crayfish-eels-elvers-salmon-and-sea-trout>

All sightings of illegal nets or traps need to be reported to 0800 807060 so we can investigate.

[Nick Walkley steps down as Homes England CEO](#)

Press release

Homes England has announced today that Chief Executive Nick Walkley will leave the agency next month.



Nick joined the Homes and Communities Agency as Chief Executive in March 2017 and has led a far-reaching overhaul of the organisation, built around the move to Homes England with a bold mission and strategic plan to increase housing supply and change the housing market.

In a statement, Nick said:

I'm very proud of what we've achieved and I'd like to thank my colleagues and our many industry partners for their dedication and support. My successor will find an organisation brimming with talent, purpose and heart. Homes England is well-positioned to support the country's economic recovery and I wish my colleagues the very best.

Peter Freeman, Chair of the Homes England Board, said in a statement:

On behalf of the Board and colleagues, I would like to thank Nick for his outstanding leadership in building a dynamic, commercial delivery agency. The country faces some crucial choices about how we emerge from the pandemic and Homes England stands ready to support the Government in stimulating economic recovery and increasing housing supply.

Nick Walkley will step down on 28 February. Gordon More, the agency's Chief Investment Officer, will act as Interim CEO, supported by Lynda McMullan, Chief Financial Officer, and an executive team drawn from the public and private sectors.

Notes to editors

- Nick Walkley joined the Homes and Communities Agency in March 2017. In February 2018, the HCA was relaunched as Homes England with a new mandate to intervene in the housing market in support of the Government's ambitions to build 300,000 homes per annum by the mid-2020s.
- During Nick Walkley's tenure, the agency has frequently met or exceeded its performance targets, while delivering several market-shaping deals. This includes agreeing a total of £1.7bn of strategic partnerships with multiple housing associations, significant land acquisitions and developments such as Burgess Hill, York Central and Northstowe, a ground-breaking partnership with Japan's Sekisui to revolutionise modular construction in this country that was voted 'deal of the decade'
- In the Government's 2020 Spending Review, the agency secured £7.4bn to invest in affordable homes across the country and is preparing to open the new Help to Buy programme to support more first-time buyers into home ownership.

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New button battery safety campaign

Working with The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, the Chartered Trading Standards Institute, the Child Accident Prevention Trust, and the British and Irish Portable Battery Association, OPSS has produced safety messages on how to keep children safe.

Button batteries are used to power everyday items including car key fobs, remotes, and children's toys – but if swallowed, they could badly injure or kill a child.

Button batteries react with saliva to create caustic soda, which is the chemical often used to unblock drains. If a child swallows a button battery and it gets stuck in their food pipe (oesophagus), it can burn a hole and cause internal bleeding, or even death. If a button battery gets into the stomach, it can also cause significant tissue damage.

Larger lithium 'coin cell' batteries (about the size of a five pence piece) are the most dangerous. Smaller batteries can be inserted into places such as ears and noses, causing serious injuries for children if undetected.

Store spare batteries securely

Store spare button batteries securely and out of children's reach. Be careful when opening multi-packs of button batteries to ensure they do not fall on the floor.

Know what products use button batteries

Ensure that you know what gadgets and toys use button batteries and check that the button battery compartment is secure. Put products with unsecured button batteries out of children's reach. Under product safety regulations, button battery compartments in toys are required to be secured.

Educate older children about button batteries

Communicate with older children about the dangers of button batteries including why they should not play with them or give them to younger children.

Discard dead button batteries straightaway

Dead button batteries can still have enough power to badly hurt a small child. When you remove a button battery, store it securely, and recycle it properly and promptly.

Act promptly if you suspect a child has swallowed a button battery

If you think your child has swallowed a button battery, take them straight to the nearest A&E department or call 999 for an ambulance. Take the battery packaging, toy, or gadget if you can to help staff identify the battery. Symptoms may not be obvious. Your child might be coughing, gagging, or drooling, or pointing to their throat or tummy. Unclear or fluctuating symptoms mean it is important to be vigilant. Do not let your child eat or drink or make your child be sick.

Groups, businesses, and individuals are encouraged to support the button batteries safety messages by retweeting and posting them on social media, using the hashtag #buttonbatteries, or using the shared campaign materials.

The campaign materials can be downloaded from the [consumer safety awareness campaigns materials GOV.UK page](#)

More information about our partners and button batteries

[The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents](#)

[The Child Accident Prevention Trust](#)

[The Chartered Trading Standards Institute](#)

[The British and Irish Portable Battery Association](#)

[Health and Social Care Secretary's statement on coronavirus \(COVID-19\): 25 January 2021](#)

Good afternoon and welcome back to Downing Street for today's coronavirus briefing. I'm joined by our Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Dr Jenny Harries and Dr Susan Hopkins, who is the Chief Medical Advisor to Public Health England and NHS Test and Trace.

I want to update you on the latest coronavirus data – and the vaccine rollout. In the last week in the UK, we have seen 37,258 cases of coronavirus, on average each day. The NHS is still under intense pressure across all parts of the country with 37,899 people in UK hospitals with COVID-19 – and that includes 4,076 on ventilators.

Sadly, today 592 more deaths were reported. We must never forget the real impact of this disease. The loved ones that we've lost. Grandparents. Parents. Friends. Colleagues. We grieve for each one. And the pressure on the front line, I can tell you, is just so relentless. And when I talk to my colleagues who are working in COVID wards.

They are flat out and they are stretched to the limit. They're doing everything they can. And I want to say a huge thank you to all those colleagues who are working so hard – they are pulling a huge shift and it's a duty on all of us to support them.

I want to extend that thanks also to our ambulance service workers and in particular I want to thank ambulance service staff who stepped up over the weekend when an appeal went out from the Scottish Ambulance Service for extra help and ambulance services from the other nations stepped forward.

Our health systems across the UK routinely work closely together – offering support when its needed. From vaccines to ambulance services, and the UK is stronger together in the fight against this pandemic.

I know how tough that fight is. Thankfully, there are early signs that the actions we're taking are working. The rise in the number of cases is slowing – and falling in some parts of the country like London and Scotland. At the same time, the number of vaccinations is going up.

Like many of you, I've been talking to members of my family who've just had the call to be vaccinated. It's a really emotional moment when people get vaccinated. It means so much to people because the vaccine brings safety to that individual and marks the route out for us all from this pandemic.

I'm so proud to be able to tell you that we have, as of last night, vaccinated 78.7% of all over 80s. That's almost 4 in 5 of everyone aged over 80. I'm delighted – you can see from these figures – there's so much enthusiasm for vaccination amongst the over 80s because octogenarians know what the scientists know: which is that the vaccines save lives.

Of course, the rate limiting factor to this vaccination programme remains supply. As we know, supply is tight. We've had a very strong performance in this past week. And I'm confident that the NHS will deliver every shot that's made available to it. To help with that, today we opened a further 32 large-scale vaccination centres including at Blackpool Winter Gardens, the Black Country Living Museum – better known to many as the set of Peaky Blinders – and London's Francis Crick Institute – itself no stranger to human ingenuity.

And I'm determined to get vaccine uptake as high as possible. Today we're funding councils to enhance their vital efforts to engage those who are hardest to reach through our Community Champions scheme. As of today, 6.6 million have now received a vaccine against COVID-19. That's more than 1 in 9 of the adult population.

On Saturday alone, we gave nearly half a million jabs. In the last week, 2.5 million people have been vaccinated across the UK. That's a rate of more than

250 people a minute.

We're on track to offer everyone in the top 4 priority groups a jab by the 15 February. If you're in one of those groups, one of the top 4 priority groups, and you haven't had the call yet, don't worry: the NHS will be in touch.

It's a truly national effort. Alongside the GPs, pharmacists and other NHS staff and of course Armed Forces working so hard – alongside all of them working every weekend every evening. I particularly want to thank the 80,000 people who stepped forward to help deliver this, doing things like volunteering to stand in car parks for 8 hours a day – in the freezing cold to ensure elderly people can safely get into a vaccination centre.

It's truly heart-warming. We've seen this selfless attitude towards the vaccination programme and it makes me very proud and very grateful to all those who have stepped forward. Because we know the responsibility for our fightback against this disease rests with every one of us. That is equally true when it comes to following the rules and maintaining social distancing.

Social distancing works – by denying the virus the social contact it needs to spread. I want to reiterate an important point made by the Chief Medical Officers and the clinical advice that they have been giving: even if you've had the jab, the rules still apply.

There's 2 reasons for this. First, because the protection takes time. Your body's immune is only fully trained up around three weeks after your jab. And, even if you have protection yourself, we still don't know whether you will be able to pass coronavirus on to someone else.

We are monitoring this very carefully and will publish information on it as soon as we have it available. So this is not a moment to ease up.

The success of our vaccine rollout means we cannot – cannot – put our progress at risk.

The final thing I want to say is this. There's no question that the new variants have made this fight a whole lot tougher. And I want to set out again, precisely what we know about the new variants. As with all science – as we have throughout this unprecedented crisis – we are learning more all the time.

The new variant first discovered in Kent – which comprises now a significant number of our cases now – is spreading 30 to 70% more easily than the existing variant. Based on analysis conducted by academic colleagues in a variety of studies there is a realistic possibility that this variant may be associated with increased mortality compared to the old variant – as well as increased transmission.

Because of our extensive genomic sequencing, we have identified cases of the new variant first identified in South Africa and that one that was first identified in Brazil. Further scientific work is underway to understand more about these variants but in the meantime it reinforces the critical message that we must be cautious.

For all of us, our response must to be extra careful stay at home – maintain social distancing. We've all frankly sacrificed too much and its so important that we protect lives and we're making progress with the vaccine.

With the end in sight we cannot put that progress at risk. And there's a promise of better days that lie ahead we have to hold our nerve and persevere through this difficult winter. So it's incumbent on us all, wherever possible to stay at home, protect the NHS, and save lives.

[37th Universal Periodic Review: UK statement on Rwanda](#)



The United Kingdom welcomes Rwanda's strong record on economic and social rights, and promotion of gender equality. We remain concerned, however, by continued restrictions to civil and political rights and media freedom. As a member of the Commonwealth, and future Chair-in-Office, we urge Rwanda to model Commonwealth values of democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights.

We recommend that Rwanda:

1. Conduct transparent, credible and independent investigations into allegations of extrajudicial killings, deaths in custody, enforced disappearances and torture, and bring perpetrators to justice.
2. Protect and enable journalists to work freely, without fear of retribution, and ensure that state authorities comply with the Access to Information law.
3. Screen, identify and provide support to trafficking victims, including those held in Government transit centres.

Thank you.

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