

Government launches Root-and-Branch review of the parole system

- review will deliver on manifesto commitment to improve public confidence
- focus on further improving openness and transparency for victims

The review will build on recent reforms to improve the transparency of the Parole Board's work but will also look at more fundamental changes. This will include providing recommendations on immediate changes but also on whether the current model – the Parole Board – is the most effective and efficient system for deciding whether prisoners should continue to be detained.

Currently, parole hearings are conducted by a panel of between one and three members who come from a variety of backgrounds, including judges and psychiatrists, and receive extensive training. The panel considers a wide range of evidence and hears the opinions of professionals who have been working with a prisoner, for example a probation officer or prison psychologist, and listens to victims about the impact the crime had on their lives. The decision the panel must make is whether the risk a prisoner poses has reduced and can now be managed safely outside of prison.

The work of the Parole Board has increased significantly in recent years and it now holds over 30 times more oral hearings than it did twenty years ago – around 8,000 every year.

The review will consider:

- whether the constitution and status of the Parole Board needs to change in order to better reflect the court-like decisions it takes and to make sure it has the necessary powers.
- whether alternatives such as a tribunal might deliver the parole function in a more efficient way.
- whether additional measures are needed to strengthen its powers, for example specific new legislative powers to compel witnesses to attend hearings and to enforce the directions it makes, in addition to its existing powers as an independent judicial body

The launch fulfils a manifesto commitment aimed at improving public trust and confidence in the parole system and comes a month after the Lord Chancellor unveiled plans to overhaul sentencing so that sexual and violent offenders serve longer jail time.

Launching the review, Justice Minister Lucy Frazer QC, said:

Over the last 2 years, our reforms have made the Parole Board's work more transparent and easier to understand for victims and the wider public.

We now have the opportunity to take a more fundamental look at the system to ensure it continues to protect people by releasing offenders only when it is safe to do so and does this in the most effective way.

In May 2018, the Parole Board rules were changed to allow it to produce summaries explaining why decisions have been taken and it has since issued over 3,000 to victims, the media and others who have requested them.

Last year, the government created a mechanism allowing the Lord Chancellor, victims and prisoners to more easily challenge Parole Board decisions that appear irrational or procedurally flawed without having to go to the courts.

The Root-and-Branch review will consider the effectiveness of these reforms and look at whether further change is needed to improve the openness and transparency of the parole process.

The first step will be a [public consultation](#) launching today inviting views on whether victims should be allowed to observe parole hearings and whether the media and wider public could have greater access to hearings, while also avoiding the risk of making it harder for the Parole Board to make the best decisions to protect the public. At present, victims are entitled to read a statement about the impact of an offender's crime but cannot attend the rest of the hearing because of the sensitive nature of what is discussed. It might be medical information about a prisoner but parole hearings also often hear graphic accounts of their crimes which might be distressing to victims and prisoners may be less forthcoming if hearings were held in public.

Any move to greater openness needs to avoid making it harder for the Parole Board to make the best decisions to protect the public. Parole Board panel chairs can also invite in observers, but this is generally only used for professionals in the criminal justice system. There are also practical considerations such as the limited facilities and security implications for public hearings given the overwhelming majority occur in prisons.

The government has also today published a '[Tailored Review](#)' of the [Parole Board](#) itself, conducted over the last 18 months, in line with the Cabinet Office requirement to review all public bodies at least once every parliament. The review made a number of recommendations to the Parole Board, HM Prison & Probation Service and the Ministry of Justice to improve timeliness and use its existing legal powers more effectively. The root-and-branch review will take account of those findings but will be a wider examination of the parole system as a whole and not just the function performed by the Board itself.

The Root-and-Branch review's [terms of reference](#) have been published online and it will aim to report to the Lord Chancellor in Summer 2021.

British Consulate General Amsterdam moves to The Hague

World news story

As of Monday 19 October, the British Consulate-General Amsterdam has moved to the British Embassy The Hague.



Ambassador Joanna Roper and Europe Director of the Dutch MFA Erica Schouten open the new consular section in The Hague with British Consul John Cameron-Webb

On Monday 19 October Ambassador [Joanna Roper CMG](#), British Consul [John Cameron-Webb](#), and Europe Director of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs Erica Schouten opened the new Consular Section of the British Embassy in the Hague.

As of Monday 19 October, the British Consulate-General Amsterdam has moved to the British Embassy The Hague. The new consular section will continue to provide the same consular services, including emergency assistance and travel documents, to British nationals living in and visiting the Netherlands.

The consulate's new address is:

British Embassy
Lange Voorhout 10
2514 ED
The Hague

For consular enquiries, including on your rights after the UK's exit from the EU, [contact us via the embassy's contact page](#).

Ambassador Joanna Roper and Europe Director Erica Schouten cut the ribbon of the new consular section in The Hague

[Call for proposals for project work in Ukraine under FCD0 International Programme Open Futures and Climate Diplomacy Fund 2020-2021](#)

The British Embassy Kyiv invites proposals for project work from 1 January 2021 to 15 March 2021, working through civil society organisations alongside government bodies in support of (a) internationally recognised universal human rights and democratic participation, including gender equality, and improved respect for minority and vulnerable groups and (b) work to tackle climate change in Ukraine.

The deadline for submitting proposals is 17:00 (Kyiv time) on 10 November 2020.

The programme will focus on the following areas:

HUMAN RIGHTS

Outcomes

- effective development and implementation of Ukraine's National Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan increases respect for equality and non-discrimination for all members of Ukrainian society, in particular, minority groups. Greater promotion of minority leadership and equal influence in decision making at the local, national and international level that informs country reforms and development of the reintegration of Crimea and non-government-controlled areas (NGCAs) in Eastern Ukraine
- Russia's human rights abuses in Crimea and NGCAs in Eastern Ukraine are documented and countered, and victims supported

Indicators of success

- greater inclusion and protection of marginalised and vulnerable groups such as the Roma community, LGBT people and people with disabilities, including by changing public perceptions and working with authorities and businesses to ensure inclusive treatment and representation
- human rights defenders, journalists and victims of human rights abuses in Crimea and NGCAs in Eastern Ukraine effectively documented and highlight the human rights situation; human rights monitoring mechanisms in illegally annexed Crimea and NGCAs strengthened
- the Ukrainian government develops and implements its new National Action

Plan on Human Rights, through access to experts and supporting civil society to advocate for policies which best meet the needs of minority and vulnerable groups

- the Ukrainian government improves and protects the rights of Crimean residents, including through effective development and implementation of its new strategy towards Crimea and improvement of services for Crimean residents. Crimean civil society organisations, residents and internally displaced persons (IDPs), in particular, Crimean Tatars, equipped with greater knowledge of their rights and ability to advocate for policies which best meet the needs of minority and vulnerable groups

CLIMATE CHANGE

Outcome

Ukraine increases climate change ambition and action ahead of COP26 (the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference, to be held in Glasgow, Scotland, from 1 to 12 November 2021, under the UK's presidency)

Indicators

- increased awareness of the Ukrainian government of the threat posed by climate change, the importance of taking urgent climate action to mitigate future risks, and its wider economical and security benefits
- increased understanding of Ukrainian local decision makers (cities and regions) about the climate change threats and benefits of climate action leading to ambitious climate commitments at the local level
- Ukrainian public and private sector (with a particular focus on business and youth) equipped with greater understanding of the threat posed by climate change and ability to advocate for urgent climate action to mitigate future risks

Notes

Successful projects should have sustainable outcomes and should clearly identify the change that will be brought about. They may also build on projects by other organisations, complementing their efforts.

All bids should make clear how they complement existing activities supported by other donors and international partners, and how work in the regions complements national level activity.

The maximum indicative funding is £10,000 for projects on Human Rights and £8,000 for projects on Climate Change. This may be in addition to co-funding and self-funding contributions which will be considered a merit.

Our funding is for the UK financial year 2020-21 only (projects must be implemented and all payments made by 15 March 2021). Where appropriate, bidders are encouraged to describe how their project could be further scaled-up if additional funding became available.

Administrative costs (office rent, project management and book-keeper rates,

utilities, communications, stationery, bank charges etc) must not exceed 8% of the total project budget. We are unable to fund academic courses or research, English language courses, the purchase of IT or other equipment.

The British Embassy Kyiv reserves the right to carry out due diligence of potential grantees, including seeking references, as part of the selection process.

Bidding is competitive and only selected projects will receive funding. The Embassy reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids without incurring any obligation to inform the affected applicant(s) of the grounds of such acceptance or rejection.

Due to the volume of bids expected we will not be able to provide feedback on unsuccessful bids.

Bidding process

Bidders should fill in the standard [Project Proposal Form](#) (ODT, 56.8KB) (MS Word Document, 123KB) and include a breakdown of project costs in the [Activity Based Budget \(ABB\)](#) (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 20KB). We will not consider proposals submitted in other formats.

Budgets must be Activity Based Budgets (ABB), all costs should be indicative, in GBP (not Ukrainian Hryvna).

Successful bids must demonstrate strong strategic relevance to the areas of programme focus and have a clear focus on delivering change and sustainability.

Successful implementers should be able to receive project funding in GBP (UK pound sterling) and open a GBP bank account for the project.

Proposals should be sent to the British Embassy Kyiv at Kyiv.Projects@fco.gov.uk by 17.00 (Kyiv time) on 10 November 2020. In the subject line, please indicate the area you are bidding for and the name of the bidder.

We aim to evaluate proposals by end November. Approved projects will commence in January 2021.

Evaluation criteria

Proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- fit to programme objectives – the extent to which the proposal addresses the issues
- quality of project – how well-defined and relevant the outcome is and how outputs will deliver this change
- value for money – the value of the expected project outcomes, the level of funding requested and institutional contribution
- previous experience – evidence of the project team's understanding the issue and of its regional activities, ability to manage and deliver a

successful project, through work done to date in the area or in related fields

- gender-sensitive approach – partners should identify the gender implications of the theme they are addressing, whether it will impact differently on men and women and how this is taken into account in the proposal. The proposals will be assessed by a mixed-gender panel

Further information

UK Partner with Thailand to Create Smarter Cities

In 2019, London was declared the leading city in the world in IESE's comparative Cities in Motion Index. [This came after London set out a roadmap to become the smartest city in the world in 2018](#)

The UK views working with Thailand, as with Southeast Asia more broadly, on smart cities as part of its ongoing commitment to creating a stronger relationships in the region.

Bangkok 16 October 2020: Today, at Smart City Week 2020 in Bangkok, the UK and the Thai Ministry of Digital Economy and Society jointly launched the 'Smart City Handbook'. The Handbook is part of plans for broader cooperation between the UK and Thai Governments on smart cities. It outlines the smart cities 'landscape' across Thailand as well as providing examples of interesting UK smart city projects and expertise.

The Smart City Handbook is just one part of a series of activities announced by the UK to support Thai / UK joint work on Smart Cities. Other activities the UK plans include:

- Ongoing projects under the UK's Global Future Cities Programme with the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration to create an improved flood management system for Lad Phrao; to plan a Data Centre to support the collection and use of data for decision-making in Bangkok; and to create a development masterplan for the Khlong Bang Luang region and Bang Wa BTS Station.
- UK hosted smart city workshops in Chiang Mai, Chonburi and Khon Kaen
- Thailand is also chosen as the focal market under the UK's Tech Export Academy for Asia Pacific, which will see 30 British smart city companies undertake a trade mission to Thailand next year.
- Earlier in June 2020, the UK has launch the Digital Trade Network with Thailand as one the focal market. The three-year pilot programme will enhance the UK's digital tech capabilities and support digital trade and investment opportunities in Thailand.

The UK believes urbanisation is one of the key challenges of the century. More than 50% of Thailand population already lives in cities. Worldwide, the figure will be 65% by 2040. Urbanisation intensifies challenges around transportation; pollution; health and wellbeing; and poverty and inequality.

The UK is seeking to create the cities of the future through urban planning and the integration of smart technology with open data and user-centred design. Recent research suggests that almost a third of the UK's urban areas with populations over 100,000 currently have planned programmes labelled as 'smart'.

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Brian Davidson, Her Majesty's Ambassador to Thailand said:

I hope the launch of the Smart City Handbook and the on ground expertise as part of the Digital Trade Network will provide the foundations for future cooperation, sharing of experience and expertise between the UK and Thailand in areas of smart city. We look forward to hosting the British companies for the Tech Export Academy trade mission next year.

Download the handbook: <https://eu.eventscloud.com/smartcityhandbook-thailand>

[**NIBSC selected by CEPI to test coronavirus vaccines globally**](#)

We are delighted to announce that the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control (NIBSC) will play a key role in evaluating vaccines that have been developed for COVID-19.

The institute is one of seven partner laboratories that have been selected by CEPI (the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations) to form a centralised laboratory to standardise the measurement of immune responses generated by multiple COVID-19 vaccine candidates. Samples from volunteers participating in phase I and phase II clinical trials will be tested in our labs as well as samples from preclinical studies.

Our scientists will be evaluating antibody responses and T-cell responses

alongside other partner laboratories that are all using the same methods and biological reference materials. This will ensure that data are obtained in a consistent way so that the results for different vaccine candidates can be directly compared.

Additionally, as the world's leading producer of biological reference materials, the NIBSC has received funding from CEPI to develop an International Standard for COVID-19 antibody. This will consist of a sample of antibody with a defined amount of biological activity. It will act as the 'gold standard' that can be used by regulators and vaccine manufacturers all over the world to calibrate their own tests.

This work will be crucial – both for enabling the most promising vaccine candidates to be identified quickly and accurately and for determining the key procedures that are required to assure vaccine quality.

Dr Nicola Rose, Head of Virology at the NIBSC, said:

Standardisation of assays in vaccine development and more centralised measurement of vaccine responses is key for the robustness of the data obtained. The NIBSC is well placed to deliver this for the benefit of public health in the fight against the pandemic.

Dr Mark Page, Principal Scientist leading this work at the NIBSC adds:

This is an important initiative providing a service to vaccine developers globally and permits accurate evaluation of candidate vaccines for this pandemic.

Dr Melanie Saville, Director of Vaccine R&D at CEPI, further adds:

We are delighted that NIBSC will be joining CEPI's centralised lab network for the standardised assessment of COVID-19 vaccine candidates. With our global group of testing laboratories now in place, samples from COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials can be shipped to one of seven sites around the world for uniform evaluation, allowing us to evaluate candidates in high quality assays and identify which vaccine candidates may be performing well, in terms of immune response, in clinical trials.

Health and Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The UK is leading the way in developing a safe and effective vaccine for COVID-19 which will be absolutely crucial to saving lives and starting our return to normality.

We have one of the best medical regulators in the world and I'm delighted the NIBSC will play a crucial role in developing international standards to help ensure all vaccines are of the highest quality, safety and effectiveness.

Further information on the centralised laboratory network and how to apply to use the network to assess your COVID-19 vaccine trial samples is available on the [CEPI website](#).

Ends.

About NIBSC

The National Institute for Biological Standards and Control (NIBSC) is a centre of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency. The institute plays a major national and international role in assuring the quality of biological medicines. The NIBSC is the leading producer and distributor of WHO International Standards and biological reference materials, supplying over 90% of International Standards used worldwide. The NIBSC also acts as the UK's Official Medicines Control Laboratory and conducts independent batch release testing of biological medicines.

In addition to its standardisation and control activities, the NIBSC hosts several expert research and resource centres. The institute is a WHO Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on Poliomyelitis and a WHO Essential Regulatory Laboratory for Influenza. The NIBSC is also home to the UK Stem Cell Bank and the Centre for AIDS Reagents.

About CEPI

CEPI is an innovative partnership between public, private, philanthropic, and civil organisations, launched at Davos in 2017, to develop vaccines to stop future epidemics. CEPI has moved with great urgency and in coordination with WHO in response to the emergence of COVID-19. CEPI has initiated nine partnerships to develop vaccines against the novel coronavirus. The programmes are leveraging rapid response platforms already supported by CEPI, as well as new partnerships. Alongside Gavi and the World Health Organization (WHO), CEPI is co-leading COVAX to develop, manufacture and fairly allocate two billion doses of vaccine by the end of 2021.

Before the emergence of COVID-19, CEPI's priority diseases included Ebola virus, Lassa virus, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus, Nipah virus, Rift Valley Fever and Chikungunya virus. CEPI also invested in platform technologies that can be used for rapid vaccine and immunoprophylactic development against unknown pathogens (Disease X).

CEPI

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