

Border Force stop £15 million of cocaine hitting streets

In the first incident, at around 6.40am on Sunday (6 September), officers stopped a Slovenian registered lorry which had arrived on a ferry from Calais carrying electronic equipment. They searched the vehicle and found 96 kilos of the drugs which had been hidden in a pallet and had a potential street value of around £4.3 million.

Shortly afterwards a second lorry, also Slovenian registered, was stopped and found to contain items removed from the first lorry to make room for the drugs. Both drivers were arrested and the investigation was referred to the National Crime Agency (NCA).

In the second incident, which happened at around 10am on the same day, Border Force officers stopped a British-registered coach which had also arrived on a ferry from Calais. They searched the vehicle, which was not carrying any passengers, and found 240 kilos of cocaine with a potential street value of around £11 million in a space behind the steps onto the coach. A 53-year-old British man, who was driving the vehicle, and a second man, also British, were arrested and the investigation referred to the NCA.

Chris Philp, Minister for Immigration Compliance and the Courts, said:

These were both excellent seizures and prevented a substantial amount of lethal Class A drugs from reaching the UK's streets.

Working with our partners at the NCA we will continue to do all we can to arrest and prosecute those involved in drug smuggling.

NCA regional head of investigations Andrea Wilson said:

These are 2 significant seizures of cocaine that have deprived criminal networks of commodity and, most importantly, potential profit. This is why this work at the border is so crucial.

The NCA is determined to do all we can with our partners like Border Force to cut the supply of drugs which make it to our streets, where they fuel violence and exploitation.

Bosnian nationals Miodrag Ivankovic, 44, and Mile Pajic, 45, both of no fixed UK address, were charged with the attempted importation of a Class A drug in relation to the first incident. They appeared at Folkestone Magistrates Court on Monday (7 September) and were remanded in custody until their next appearance at Canterbury Crown Court on 5 October.

Mark Tucker, 53, of Longshaw Street, Blackburn, Lancashire, and Christopher Bullows, 50, of Lord Street, St Helens, were charged with the attempted importation of a Class A drug in relation to the second incident. They appeared at Medway Magistrates Court yesterday (8 September) where they were remanded in custody until their next appearance at Canterbury Crown Court on 12 October.

Border Force officers use hi-tech search equipment to combat immigration crime and detect banned and restricted goods that smugglers attempt to bring into the country.

[£30 million boost to help unlock land for new homes](#)

In a speech at the Chartered Institute of Housing's annual conference, Cabinet Office Minister Lord Agnew has announced today (9 September 2020) that the government is boosting its Land Release Fund (LRF) and the One Public Estate (OPE) programme with an additional £30 million to help release surplus land for housing and support local economies to bounce back from the pandemic.

The LRF will offer councils the opportunity to bid for £20 million for remediation works and infrastructure to bring their surplus sites forward for housing. The LRF targets small sites with a focus on supporting SME builders.

The LRF currently supports 73 council projects which are on track to release land for more than 6,000 homes by next March. Examples include:

- **Broadland District Council in Norfolk:** awarded funding to deliver improvements such as site highways works and the implementation of a surface water drainage strategy and pumping station. 22 homes at Rosebery Road, Great Plumstead have now been completed by Broadland District Council's housing company.
- **The Griffin regeneration area in Blackburn:** awarded funding to carry out new highways access and land remediation work to accelerate the release of brownfield land for 140 new homes. This has helped to make the site viable, supporting regeneration of the local area and bringing forward a much-needed scheme of new family homes for rent and sale.

The OPE programme will provide £10 million, supporting the earliest stages of development. New and existing partnerships will be able to bid for practical support to deliver ambitious property programmes in collaboration with

central government and other public sector partners, which deliver homes, jobs, efficiencies and improved public services.

The Burnholme development in York is one example, supporting the delivery of a modern health and wellbeing hub with new homes and spaces for education, health and worship.

Cabinet Office Minister Lord Agnew said:

By taking a fresh look at how we use buildings and release surplus public property and land, the One Public Estate programme has helped to create thousands of new homes and jobs and breathed new life into communities.

As we look forward, across Government and local authorities, we will continue this work to make sure we deliver the vital public services people need while providing value for money for taxpayers.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP said:

Delivering much-needed new homes across the country is central to the mission of this government.

This new funding will help councils right across England to turn unloved, unused land into new homes and communities where they are needed most. It is an important part of how we are working with local government and the housing industry at every level to support our recovery from the impact of the pandemic.

Cllr James Jamieson, Chairman of the Local Government Association, said:

Councils continue to lead their communities through the coronavirus crisis, working closely with other local partners including health and emergency services.

One Public Estate will play a crucial role as we move into the next phase and help with the local and national economic recovery. This additional funding will support councils to make better use of their assets, including their spare land and property, to help join up local services.

This in turn will create new savings and efficiencies, as we look towards the future of local public services after the pandemic.

Funding will be allocated in the current financial year and is now available for bids.

Today's announcement builds on measures to transform unused land to deliver

much-needed new homes, including the announcement last month that the government is investing £360 million in Mayoral Combined Authority areas through its £400 million Brownfield Fund. This will deliver 26,000 new homes while protecting greenfield sites.

Keeping boaters afloat

A £5.2million capital maintenance programme for Environment Agency navigation infrastructure has been announced.

The Environment Agency is releasing its annual schedule of improvements for many of its structures along the Thames, between St John's Lock in Lechlade, Gloucester, and Teddington Lock in southwest London. This will help to ensure safe navigation along this iconic river for boating communities and many other river users.

The majority of work will begin in November this year, carrying through to March 2021. The Environment Agency gives several weeks' notice, so that river users can plan any winter trips. Major work will be carried out at 10 of the Environment Agency's 45 lock sites, some of which will require a formal closure.

Peter Collins, a capital investment programme manager for the Environment Agency, said:

Locks, weirs and other navigation infrastructure make recreational and commercial boating on the Thames possible.

This multi million pound investment programme, by the Environment Agency, allows our team of engineers, craftsmen and contractors to ensure that everything remains in safe working order.

Our in house carpenters are making new timber lock gates from sustainable sources for Day's Lock, Dorchester in Oxfordshire. The new gates at Molesey Lock in Surrey will be made from steel, but in keeping with the tradition of a Thames lock.

Four locks that will require a formal closure between 2 November 2020 and 19 March 2021 are:

- Days Lock, near Dorchester, Oxfordshire: replacing lock gates and refurbishing parts of the lock chamber and lock surround.
- Cookham Lock, Berkshire: refurbishing tail gate cill, lock side and head landings.
- Abingdon Lock, Oxfordshire: upgrading the existing tail landing to make it more resilient to winter flooding and easier for canoes to get in and

out of the water.

- Molesey Lock, Surrey: replacing lock gates, improving pedestrian access and refurbishing parts of the lock chamber.

The Environment Agency's [River Thames winter investment programme](#) is subject to change. Boaters can subscribe to e-mail updates on River Thames closures and restrictions by contacting riverthames@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Boaters' registration fees contribute towards the cost of maintenance, but do not cover major refurbishments or replacement works. The Environment Agency receives government funding, which it invests very carefully, to ensure maximum value for money for the taxpayer.

All boats on the River Thames must be registered with the Environment Agency. Visit www.gov.uk/environment/boats-waterways for more information.

Notes to editors

Filming opportunities can be arranged around the most visually striking elements of the work; for example:

- Installing a coffer dam, a temporarily walled-off area within the river that water is pumped out of, to enable working in dry conditions when a lock chamber is renovated.
- Using a large mobile crane to safely lift lock gates in or out of position; timber lock gates are repaired, refurbished or recycled at our depot.

[Government sets out plans for new approach to subsidy control](#)

- UK to follow World Trade Organisation (WTO) subsidy rules and other international commitments, replacing the EU state aid laws, from January 1
- ministers confirm the UK does not intend to return to the 1970s approach of trying to run the economy or bailing out unsustainable companies
- clear guidance on WTO rules will be published before the end of the year for public authorities and devolved administrations
- business will have the chance to comment on the design of the UK's own domestic regime of subsidy control next year

The UK will follow WTO subsidy rules after the end of the transition period, Business Secretary Alok Sharma confirmed today (9 September).

The government also confirmed that the UK will adhere to any international obligations on subsidies agreed under future free trade agreements.

The WTO rules are an internationally recognised common standard covering financial assistance granted by governments and public authorities to companies. Unlike EU member states, most advanced economies do not have substantive rules regulating subsidies beyond those set by the WTO.

The EU state aid rules are a unique set of comprehensive legislative subsidy controls in which it is the responsibility of the European Commission to police against subsidies distorting competition between EU member states within the single market. From 1 January, the UK will no longer be bound by those requirements and will have the opportunity to design its own subsidy control regime in a way that works for the UK economy.

The government confirmed it does not intend to return to the 1970s approach of trying to run the economy or bailing out unsustainable companies, maintaining that no government of a modern, competitive market economy should stand in the way or prevent adjustment to underlying market conditions.

The WTO rules, which apply to goods and not services, have ensured an effective international trading system for over 25 years. The rules ban subsidies that are dependent on either how much a company exports, or the use of domestic goods over imports. For all other subsidies, they provide a mechanism to resolve disputes between countries. These rules are designed to facilitate an effective international trading system and are followed by the vast majority of countries.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

We want a competitive, dynamic market economy in which we can back British industries to create more jobs in this country, while also making the UK the best possible place to start and grow a business.

While our guiding philosophy remains that we do not want a return to the 1970s approach of picking winners and bailing out unsustainable companies with taxpayers' money, the UK must have flexibility as an independent, sovereign nation to intervene to protect jobs and to support new and emerging industries now and into the future.

As we take back control of our money and laws from the EU, we have a unique opportunity to design our own subsidy control regime in a way that works businesses, workers and consumers.

Over the coming months I want to work closely with businesses and public authorities across all parts of the United Kingdom to consider how best we can use these new freedoms.

Guidance will be published before the end of the year for public authorities which explains the WTO rules, and any commitments on subsidies agreed through the UK's free trade agreements. There will also be further legislation to remove redundant EU state aid rules from the statute book at the end of the transition period, providing the necessary legal certainty for businesses.

In the coming months, the government will publish a consultation on whether the UK should go further than its international commitments, including on the need for further legislation.

A UK-wide subsidy control regime will ensure that subsidies do not unduly distort competition within the UK's internal market. For example, it will ensure that a Scottish firm is not unfairly undercut or disadvantaged by a subsidy decision in England, and vice-versa. It will also mean that big companies cannot play off the regions, nations, towns, and cities of the UK against each other in a competition to extract taxpayer subsidy – therefore ensuring a dynamic and competitive market economy throughout the UK.

These plans come alongside publication of the new [UK Internal Market Bill](#) in Parliament, which contains measures that will protect jobs and trade across the whole of the United Kingdom after the transition period ends. The Bill clarifies that the UK Parliament alone should legislate for the regulation of subsidies and will ensure that there is no confusion or ambiguity in UK law about the interpretation of the state aid elements in the Northern Ireland Protocol.

The Bill will also guarantee that companies can trade unhindered in every part of the UK as they have done for centuries, while maintaining world-leading high standards for consumers, workers, food, animal welfare and the environment.

[Natural flood management project to begin at Greater Manchester beauty spot](#)

- A project designed to showcase natural flood management techniques and restore peatland on treasured local moorland is about to start.
- Works form part of the £40m Radcliffe and Redvales Flood Risk Management Scheme and aim to deliver numerous, small-scale, 'slow-the flow' interventions in the River Irwell catchment helping to protect properties downstream.

Delivered by the Environment Agency, working through the Moors for the Future Partnership, the ambitious venture forms part of the £40m Radcliffe and Redvales Flood Risk Management Scheme. £476k of additional Defra funding has been allocated, as part of the design process, for use on collaborative projects that will complement the capital scheme and further reduce flooding

to communities at risk.

The works, which will help slow the flow of flood water in rapidly responding catchments such as Irwell Vale, Strongstry, Chatterton, Ramsbottom as well as the high risk area of Radcliffe and Redvales focus on numerous, small-scale, 'slow-the flow' interventions that will help protect properties from the risk of flooding.

On Holcombe Moor stone dams will be erected in eroded gullies to restrict the flow of flood water. Initially, this work will be carried out in the Alden Ratchers area by transporting stones by helicopter from a nearby quarry. Sphagnum moss will also be reintroduced to allow the top layers of the peat to retain more water.

Peter Costello, Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager for the Environment Agency said:

"The commitment of multiple agencies to work together and explore nature based solutions alongside traditional flood defences, is a powerful component of Greater Manchester's response to the Climate Emergency. There has already been some fantastic work delivered in partnership across the River Irwell catchment over the years to help slow the flow of floodwaters using natural flood risk management techniques. But we need to do more. We hope that our work at Holcombe Moor will be a catalyst for more of these measures to be installed across Greater Manchester catchments."

Matt Scott-Campbell, Programme Manager for Conservation and Land Management at Moors for the Future Partnership, said:

"With extreme weather events becoming more frequent, the valuable opportunity and need for healthy peatlands to slow the flow of water into the valleys below becomes more and more important. This project will have biodiversity, carbon capture and natural flood management outcomes, directly linking the benefits of a healthy upland landscape to downstream communities at risk of flooding in Rossendale and Greater Manchester. The restoration of degraded peatlands can make an important contribution to reducing flood risk, whilst also achieving other valuable benefits, for example this project will also improve the capacity of Holcombe Moor to absorb carbon, supporting our efforts to respond to the climate emergency."

The natural flood management project forms part of the Environment Agency's overall vision to develop flood management schemes that will not only reduce the risks to local communities, but also tackle climate change through carbon capture and new habitats for wildlife. The works on Holcombe Moor are expected to restore the capacity of peatland to absorb carbon and improve blanket bog habitat, which in turn will help the recovery of breeding moorland bird like golden plover and dunlin.