

[Letter from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to Scottish and Welsh Governments](#)

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Michael Gove, has written to Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Europe and External Affairs, Mike Russell MSP, Counsel General and Minister for European Transition, Jeremy Miles MS, and Minister for Europe and International Development, Jenny Gilruth MSP.

[New study to understand effect of COVID-19 on veterans](#)

The work is sponsored by the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) and will be undertaken by the world leading King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR), King's College London.

The study will look at whether COVID-19 has had any specific impact on the veteran community in the UK. This in turn will allow policy makers in government to understand potential issues affecting veterans and respond accordingly based on expert advice and evidence.

The work will collect data on loneliness, social support, alcohol consumption, mental health, gambling and general well-being. It will also explore the resilience of veterans and whether their experiences in the Armed Forces have actually better prepared them for the unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data will be collected through an online survey starting on Monday 15th June.

The OVA has been working closely with the charity sector throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This has included the creation of a £6 million COVID-19 impact fund, to support charities to continue their essential work during this challenging period. This new study is a further important step to ensuring that government continues to drive forward its ambition to ensure the UK is the best place to be a veteran anywhere in the world.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Johnny Mercer said:

We have seen a great contribution from veterans during the pandemic; from the amazing Captain Sir Tom Moore, to all those who have volunteered in their communities.

It is important that we understand the effect of this terrible pandemic on the veteran community too, so we can provide effective support, tailored to their needs.

This new study is an important part of that.

Co-Director of the KCMHR, King's College London, Professor Sir Simon Wessely said:

This study has been measuring the health and well-being of a large sample of our Armed Forces, starting in 2003. We have followed their progress, some for nearly 20 years, through service in conflicts such as Iraq and Afghanistan, and then as many returned to civilian life.

Now it is time to see how they are coping with a different challenge, that of COVID-19.

The first results of this new work focussed on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to be published in autumn/winter 2020.

KCMHR will draw on their world-leading research into veterans' health and for this study researchers will be approaching those veterans living in the UK who took part in the last KCMHR health and wellbeing study (2014-2016).

This forms part of a unique cohort of 20,000 former service personnel that was originally created in 2003 to monitor the mental health and social consequences of deployment and has become a reliable and trusted source of information on mental health and wellbeing of both serving personnel and veterans.

The Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA), which was created last year, is ensuring that the whole of government is delivering better outcomes for veterans, particularly in areas such as mental health, employment and housing. It is working in partnership with government departments, the Devolved Administrations and charities to coordinate activity across the United Kingdom.

The Role of the OVA includes:

- Pulling together all functions of government, and better coordinating charity sector provision, in order to ensure this nation's life-long duty to those who have served
- Ensuring that every single veteran and their family knows where to turn to access support when required
- Helping to generate a 'single view of the veteran' by making better use of data to understand veterans' needs and where gaps in provision exist
- Improving the perception of veterans

United Nations Secretary General's report on the implementation of Resolution 73/295: UK statement

Press release

UK government statement following the publication of the UN Secretary General's report on implementing Resolution 73/295 relating to the Chagos Archipelago.



UK government statement:

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland acknowledges the considerable work of the Secretary-General and his office, during a very challenging period, in producing the report on the 'Advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965' published on 12 June 2020.

The United Kingdom voted against [General Assembly resolution 73/295](#) and remains firmly of the view that the International Court of Justice and General Assembly are not the appropriate fora for resolving what is fundamentally a bilateral matter of disputed sovereignty between 2 UN member states. Nevertheless, the United Kingdom was grateful for the opportunity to provide input to this report.

The United Kingdom has no doubt about its sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Mauritius has never held sovereignty over the Archipelago and we do not recognise its claim. However, we have a long-standing commitment, first made in 1965, to cede sovereignty of the territory to Mauritius when it is no longer required for

defence purposes. We stand by that commitment. The United Kingdom is also committed to doing more (on a voluntary basis) to address the aspirations of Chagossians including the desire for better lives and to maintain a connection to the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). Despite our disagreement over the British Indian Ocean Territory, the United Kingdom and Mauritius remain close friends and Commonwealth partners. We remain open to dialogue on all shared issues of mutual interest, as highlighted by the friendly and constructive discussion that took place between the UK's Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister of Mauritius on 27 April.

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[Latest rod licence figures show increase as restrictions lifted](#)

Environment Agency figures released today show a huge surge in [fishing licence](#) sales after the government lifted restrictions on outdoor activities.

Between 13 May 2020, when the restrictions were lifted, and 9 June 2020 over 335,000 licences were sold compared to 142,000 licences sold from the start of the year to end of March 2020, a rise of over 230% in less than two months. This also represents a rise of over 200,000 more than the same period last year.

The Environment Agency and the sport's governing body, the Angling Trust, believe the rise is due to existing anglers embracing the opportunity to start fishing again, together with those taking up the sport for the first time or returning to the sport after a long absence – prompted by the pursuit of new hobbies during lockdown.

Fishing licence income is vital to the work of the Environment Agency to maintain, improve and develop fisheries. Revenue generated from fishing licence sales is reinvested to benefit angling, with work including tackling illegal fishing, protecting habitats for fish and improving facilities for anglers.

Last year alone, the revenue generated by over 800,000 anglers contributed to the cost of building more than 100 fish passes, allowing the free movement of fish through rivers. Other work covered by the licence fee included nearly 2,000 fish surveys and improvements to over 1,000 kilometres of river and 87 hectares of stillwater fisheries.

The rise in interest in fishing comes at a prime time for anglers with the end of the close season for coarse fishing on rivers just around the corner. The annual close season, which runs from the 15 March until 15 June helps to protect coarse fish stocks across England during spawning.

Dr Graeme Storey, Environment Agency Acting Deputy Director for Fisheries and the Natural Environment, said:

Since the lifting of restrictions on recreational angling it has been encouraging to see not only anglers returning to the sport, but also people trying fishing for the first time. Responsible fishing is an excellent way to engage with nature and enjoy being outdoors, which in turn can provide positive health and welfare benefits. As a consequence of the revenue generated through the sale of rod licences, anglers are at the heart of protecting and improving the very things they care about.

Fishing really is an activity that most people, of any age, can participate in and enjoy. Whether looking for a moment of solitude or a family day out, I would encourage anyone thinking about it to give it a go. It is important to remember that if you decide to return to fishing or take it up for the first time, you must have a valid fishing licence and adhere to current government guidelines on social distancing.

Jamie Cook, Angling Trust CEO, said

The Angling Trust is delighted that ministers embraced the recommendations in our When We Fish Again report and authorised an early resumption of angling in England to COVID compliant guidelines. We are also delighted to be witnessing something of a renaissance in angling with former anglers returning to the sport and newcomers trying fishing for the first time. In these difficult times we believe that our sport has much to offer in terms social, health and economic wellbeing.

In England and Wales you need a [fishing licence](#) to fish for salmon, trout, freshwater fish, smelt or eel with a rod and line. Anglers found fishing without a licence can face fines of up to £2,500.

It is imperative to anglers follow the Government guidance in place, limiting contact with other people and maintain a distance of 2m from other anglers whilst fishing. If you are in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, you must adhere to the guidance and regulations set by the Scottish and Welsh governments or Northern Ireland Executive at all times.

Group to measure for coronavirus prevalence in waste water

News story

New working group includes a range of water companies and experts across the UK



Sewage monitoring is being established across the UK as part of an advance warning system to detect new outbreaks of coronavirus.

The new approach is based on recent research findings that fragments of genetic material (RNA) from the virus can be detected in waste water. This could be used to detect the presence of the virus in the population, including those who are asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic.

The World Health Organization is clear there is currently no evidence that coronavirus has been transmitted via sewerage systems.

Sampling from sewage treatment works around the country will begin shortly. Data gathered will be used to refine the approach and feed into the Covid-19 Alert System created by the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC).

Techniques are still in their infancy, so the government and Devolved Administration partners are working closely with academics, UK Research and Innovation and the Natural Environment Research Council and water companies in developing and testing this cutting-edge approach.

This UK work is being coordinated by Defra, the Environment Agency and the JBC, working closely with water companies and the Universities of Bangor, Edinburgh, Bath and Newcastle.

In Scotland, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency has begun analysis of the first samples of waste water provided by Scottish Water, coordinating the work with the Scottish Government's Centre of Expertise for Waters, the

University of Edinburgh's Roslin Institute and Health Protection Scotland.

In Wales, a number of options to support specific wastewater monitoring projects are being assessed, which would complement the UK programme to aid Covid-19 surveillance.

Further details will be released as the work develops.

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