

Committee on Standards in Public Life announces review of electoral regulation

The independent Committee on Standards in Public Life has today announced a review of the regulation of elections.

The Committee is starting a [public consultation](#) inviting views on the way donations and campaign expenditure by candidates, political parties and non-party campaigners in election and referendum campaigns are regulated and enforced by the Electoral Commission, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the Police.

Announcing the review, Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, Jonathan Evans said:

“Our review will look at what the regulation of election finance should achieve and how it is regulated. That will involve examining the Electoral Commission’s role as a regulator of election finance, along with the work of the police and CPS in this area. We intend to look at electoral regulation from first principles – what really matters in this area? What values and principles should guide regulation of finance during elections?”

“Our predecessors on the Committee recommended the setting up of the Electoral Commission in 1998 and last looked at its work in 2007. Since then, digital campaigning has revolutionised the way parties and campaigners engage with voters. It has made it harder to track how much is being spent, on what, where and by whom. This review will look at the system for the regulation of election finance and whether it meets the challenges of elections in the 21st century. We are not reviewing wider aspects of the Commission’s work in this review or looking at how political parties raise funds.

“We are keen to hear from anyone who has experience or views on the regulation of party finance. We particularly want to hear from those with first-hand experience of regulating or being regulated and from third party campaigners. We need your input.

“Fair and free elections are the basic tenet of democracy. Voters should feel confident that campaigners operate on a level playing field and that political finance is robustly, transparently and effectively regulated during elections. We intend to report with any recommendations by June 2021.”

1. Interview requests and media enquiries should go to Maggie O’Boyle on 07880 740627.
2. The independent Committee on Standards in Public Life advises the Prime Minister on ethical standards across the whole of public life in the UK.

It monitors and reports on issues relating to the standards of conduct of all public office holders. To find out more about the Committee's work go to <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/the-committee-on-standards-in-public-life>

3. The current members of the Committee are: Lord (Jonathan) Evans KCB DL, Chairman, Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP (Labour), Dr Jane Martin CBE, Dame Shirley Pearce DBE, Jane Ramsey, Monisha Shah, Rt Hon Lord (Andrew) Stunell OBE (Liberal Democrat) and Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP (Conservative).
4. You can follow the Committee on twitter @PublicStandards.
5. The Terms of Reference for the Committee's review into electoral regulation are to:

I. Identify the principles and values that should underpin the regulation of donations and campaign expenditure by candidates, political parties and non-party campaigners in election and referendum campaigns.

II. Examine the Electoral Commission's remit as a regulator of election finance and associated electoral law. This will include consideration of whether the Electoral Commission requires new powers to allow it to fulfil its role as a robust regulator, including powers to compel the provision of documents by third parties such as social media companies, to require greater transparency on party spending on campaign activity and to protect the electoral process from the influence of foreign players.

III. Examine the enforcement regime for election finance offences committed by candidates, parties and non-party campaigners. The review will examine how the civil sanctions regime interacts with the prosecution regime and consider whether it works effectively as a complete system. This will include consideration of the role of the Electoral Commission, the police and the relevant prosecuting authorities in handling breaches of election finance laws.

IV. Consider whether the Electoral Commission should play a role in criminal prosecutions for breaches of election finance laws.

V. Consider whether the Electoral Commission's civil sanction regime should be expanded to cover the enforcement of candidate finance laws, in addition to its current civil sanctions powers that apply to party and non-party campaigner finance laws, under a single regulatory framework for candidates, parties and non-party campaigners.

The following areas are within the scope of this inquiry:

- The regulatory functions and powers of the Electoral Commission

- The relevant functions of the police and the relevant prosecuting authorities

The following issues are outside the scope of this inquiry:

- Matters relating to the arrangements for funding political parties.
- Matters relating to the regulation of elections that are devolved, although where applicable, lessons will be learnt from experiences in the devolved administrations.
- Matters relating to the Electoral Commission's role in overseeing elections and developing public awareness campaigns.

[Business Secretary launches working groups to help unleash Britain's growth potential](#)

Press release

Business Secretary Alok Sharma is creating 5 new business-focused groups to unleash Britain's growth potential and create jobs, as part of the government's plans to help the economy bounce back from the coronavirus pandemic.



Beginning this week, Mr Sharma will chair the first meetings of new 'recovery roundtables' bringing together businesses, business representative groups and leading academics. They will consider measures to support economic recovery and ensure we have the right skills and opportunities in place for our workforce over the next 18 months.

They will also explore key domestic and global challenges to support a green and resilient recovery and ensure the UK is at the forefront of new and emerging industries.

Focused on 5 key themes, each group will explore how business can work with government to deliver economic growth and jobs:

- The future of industry: How to accelerate business innovation and leverage private sector investment in research and development
- Green recovery: How to capture economic growth opportunities from the shift to net zero carbon emissions
- Backing new businesses: How to make the UK the best place in the world to start and scale a business
- Increasing opportunity: How to level up economic performance across the UK, including through skills and apprenticeships
- The UK open for business: How to win and retain more high value investment for the UK

This initiative builds on the close engagement between the UK's business community, the Business Department and across Whitehall as we have responded to the pandemic.

This includes 5 new ministerial-led taskforces to develop further plans for how and when closed sectors can safely reopen, following the publication of the Prime Minister's roadmap out of lockdown.

Secretary of State for Business Alok Sharma commented:

These roundtables are a redoubling of our efforts to listen to and work with the business community and academic experts as we consider the measures needed to support our economic bounce-back. This will undoubtedly lead to a cleaner, greener, more resilient economy which will create new jobs.

The output from this initiative will feed directly into the government's work on economic recovery and will help deliver the commitments we made to the British people only last December, which now take on an even greater sense of urgency and importance.

Notes to editors

The membership of the 5 working groups will be published in due course.

Each working group, which aims to be representative of UK industry, will consist of approximately 20-25 participants and will be chaired by BEIS Secretary of State Alok Sharma.

There will also be an opportunity for other parties and individuals interested in this initiative to share written submissions with the Business Department.

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Independent review backs introduction of Highly Protected Marine Areas

An independent review led by former Fisheries Minister Richard Benyon, and published today on World Ocean Day, is calling for the introduction of Highly Protected Marine Areas in English waters. The review was commissioned on last year's world ocean day by then Environment Secretary Michael Gove as part of the Government's drive to protect our waters.

These highly protected marine areas would enable a greater recovery of the marine ecosystem and enhance the Government's commitment to a national 'Blue Belt', which has already seen an area of 92,000 square km protected – 40% of English seas.

The UK currently has a range of protections in place through a network of 355 Marine Protected Areas, which offer protections for a designated feature or habitat within their boundaries. Highly Protected Marine Areas would go further by taking a 'whole site approach' and only permitting certain activities within their boundaries such as vessel transit, scuba diving and kayaking. Activities that could have a damaging effect on habitats or wildlife, including fishing, construction and dredging would be banned. The review claims the introduction of such areas could lead to a significant biodiversity boost for our seas by giving our marine life the best chance to recover and thrive.

The review, which was supported by a panel of independent experts, also sheds light on the potential social and economic benefits of introducing highly protected marine areas. These benefits include increased tourism and recreational activities, opportunities for scientific research and education, and positive effects for human health. It also suggests that any potential fishing restriction could be counterbalanced by a stronger and biodiverse marine wildlife – with potential long-term benefits for the fishing industry from providing areas where sea life can develop and breed undisturbed.

Three Marine Protected Areas: Flamborough Head, Lundy Island and the Medway Estuary currently have in place 'no take zones' which prohibit all methods of fishing.

The panel has made a number of recommendations which will now be considered by Government with a formal response made in due course.

Key recommendations include:

- the introduction of Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) within the existing network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to allow for the full protection and recovery of marine ecosystems
- a "whole site approach" to protect all species and habitats within the

HPMA boundaries

- potential sites should be identified on the basis of ecological principles. Once these are met, the selection of sites should seek to minimise any negative effects on stakeholders. To do this, Government should agree the identification and regulation of these sites in partnership with sea users
- 'blue carbon' habitats are identified for protection during the HPMA site selection process to help combat climate change

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

Our 'Blue Belt' of Marine Protected Areas has already raised the bar for marine protection and we are committed to the highest standards of sustainability for our seas that set a gold standard around the world.

That's why we asked the panel to conduct this review and I am very grateful to them for their work. I welcome and agree with the spirit of ambition, which is in line with our 25 Year Environment Plan, and we will now carefully consider the recommendations set out in the review.

Chair of the Independent review Panel Richard Benyon said:

The sea has provided food, materials and recreational opportunities for thousands of years. However, human activities have significantly impacted these habitats and species, which we now know need greater protection.

Our review demonstrates that in order to deliver the protections our most threatened habitats need, Highly Protected Marine Areas need to be introduced, and I hope that government will engage with local communities and stakeholders to move forward plans to designate these new sites.

Chair of Natural England Tony Juniper, said:

I welcome the recommendations put forward by the Panel. This review is an important marker of how we can use highly protected areas to mitigate the impact of human activities on the ocean, and support its recovery to a more natural state.

I thank the panel for their work and look forward to working with

Defra as they consider how best to take forward the recommendations.

Lewis Pugh, endurance swimmer and UN Patron of the Oceans, said:

The coronavirus pandemic has shown us how important our relationship with nature is. The beauty of nature is that it can bounce back – but only if we give it proper protection. There is little point in having protected areas that are not pulling their weight.

The UK has some of the richest and most diverse sea life in the world. I'm excited that we may soon have a pilot programme of Highly Protected Marine Protected Areas in England, but this must amount to more than dipping a toe in the water.

I urge the UK government to show the same leadership as with their call for 30% of the world's oceans to be protected. They must act urgently to strengthen protection, as in a few years' time it will be too late to fix the crisis in our oceans.

Richard Benwell, Chief Executive of Wildlife and Countryside Link, said:

The panel's work shows strong consensus from conservation, industry and fisheries perspectives: highly protected areas are essential in reviving the ocean. We urge Ministers to now implement the recommendations quickly and create fully protected HPMA's for our seas. These will help recover our seas for people, nature and climate and be a vital addition to the UK network of marine sites. This would set Government at the cutting edge of ocean action and reinforce its leadership role in the Global Ocean Alliance as it calls to protect 30% of the world's oceans.

On World Ocean Day, this review builds on the UK Government's commitment to further advance ocean protection measures including last year's designation of a further [41 Marine Protection Zones](#) protecting species and habitats such as the rare stalked jellyfish, short-snouted seahorse and blue mussel beds. The Government is currently putting in place management measures for Marine Protected Areas, including seeking new powers through the Fisheries Bill, and through implementation of the 25 Year Environment Plan.

This news comes as seven new countries joined the UK led Global Ocean Alliance, an initiative aimed at securing protection of 30% of the world's oceans by 2030. There are now a total of 20 countries in the Alliance following today's announcement. Germany and Italy are amongst the major new

players to join, other joiners include Fiji, Cabo Verde, Monaco, Senegal, and Luxemburg.

This complements a wide programme of overseas engagements, including through the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance and the Commonwealth Litter Programme, aiming to prevent plastic waste from reaching the ocean.

The Government has also committed to a £500 million Blue Planet fund to export UK expertise in marine science around the world, supporting overseas countries to protect marine habitats.

The [Benyon Review into Highly Protected Marine Areas](#) was announced on [World Oceans Day 2019 by the then Environment Secretary Michael Gove](#) .

This review covers the English inshore, offshore and Northern Irish offshore waters. Collectively these are referred to as Secretary of State waters.

Chair of the review:

Richard Benyon is a former MP and Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries. He is actively interested in environmental issues, and is a former chair of the All Party Parliamentary Environment Group and a former member of the Environment Audit Committee. He is widely respected within the fishing industry, and during his time at Defra worked closely with marine conservation groups, fishermen, and coastal communities during the development of the first tranche of Marine Conservation Zones.

Panel Members:

Peter Barham, Chair of the Seabed User and Developer Group, a representative group of UK marine industries.

Peter has over 20 years' experience as a senior manager in public and private sectors delivering environmental and sustainable development solutions.

Joan Edwards, Director of Marine Conservation at The Wildlife Trusts.

Joan has substantial experience working on marine issues in the Wildlife Trusts for over 30 years and led the NGO campaign for the Marine and Coastal Access Act and its implementation.

Michel Kaiser, Professor of Fisheries Conservation, Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh.

Michael is a board member of Fisheries Innovation Scotland and a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Fisheries Expert Group.

Susan Owens OBE, FBA, Emeritus Professor of Environment and Policy, University of Cambridge, and Fellow Emerita of Newnham College.

Susan was a member of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution that produced the 'Turning the Tide' report which addressed the impact of

fisheries on the marine environment.

Callum Roberts, Professor of Marine Conservation, University of York.

Trustee of Nekton Oxford Deep Ocean Research Institute; Trustee and Chief Scientific Advisor to the Blue Marine Foundation; Member of WWF-UK's Council of Ambassador.

Nathan de Rozarieux, inshore fisherman and fisheries consultant.

Nathan has been a Board Member of the Sea Fish Industry Authority since 2018 and was a committee member of the Cornwall Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority.

Benj Sykes, Vice-President of Ørsted's Offshore wind business.

Co-chair, Offshore Wind Industry Council. Benj is also on the Board of RenewableUK and is a Fellow of the Energy Institute with over 30 years' experience in the energy sector.

[COVID-19 tests offered to every care home for elderly or those with dementia](#)

Press release

Test kits have been offered to every care home for over-65s or those with dementia in England, reaching the testing target for 6 June.



- Target to offer test kits to every care home for over-65s by 6 June has been met
- Whole care home testing kits delivered to nearly 9,000 settings
- Tests offered to eligible care homes regardless of symptoms

All eligible care homes who need them will have received tests regardless of symptoms, with kits being delivered across the country.

Since the launch of whole care home testing the government has provided 1,071,103 test kits to 8,984 care homes, and we are now able send out over 50,000 test kits a day.

As well as testing kits that have been sent to homes directly, tens of thousands of care home workers and residents have also been tested by Public Health England or at drive-through testing sites and mobile testing units. This is in addition to care home workers receiving test kits to their own homes through the separate employer and employee portal.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We have now managed successfully to offer tests to every care home that is eligible, both for staff testing and for residents to be tested.

What that means is that for about three-quarters of a million people living and working in nearly 9,000 eligible care homes, the tests have been delivered.

To ensure every care home has the support it needs, the government sent test kits to all eligible care homes unless they stated they did not want to receive them. Test results for residents will be communicated to the care home managers.

Testing asymptomatic workers and residents helps prevent and control outbreaks. It means those who test positive can be isolated, reducing the number of people who can spread the virus and protecting the most vulnerable. It also helps to build up a strategic understanding of the prevalence of the virus in local areas and the sector as a whole.

This is in addition to the new Test and Trace service which has an important role in limiting the spread of the virus, and thousands of those who have tested positive have already been contacted and their close contacts traced.

Published 7 June 2020

[Good karma: British travellers rescued by Deputy High Commissioner via](#)

mountain roads, 'elephant corridor' and a breakdown in a tiger reserve.

Deputy High Commissioner Jeremy Pilmore-Bedford and his team of five drove 12 hours from Bangalore to Cochin, while another team embarked on a 13 hour journey from Chennai to Trivandrum, to help British nationals board their charter flight home on April 15.

The groups had been stranded across Kerala and Tamil Nadu for four weeks after flight options in Southern India abruptly ceased when the pandemic escalated.

But on twisty and notoriously rough Western Ghats mountain roads on the way from Bangalore, the Foreign Office rescue team picked up a puncture in the middle of Bandipur Tiger Reserve. The reserve, which recently featured in the Sir David Attenborough-narrated documentary Wild Karnataka, is home to the second-biggest tiger population in India, with nearly 400 big cats believed to be roaming in the area.

With the team standing lookout, the Deputy High Commissioner raced to change the tyre under the blazing sun and rising humidity of the tropical forest. To add to the adventure, the road also runs through the middle of an elephant migration corridor, and the group encountered a female elephant during the ordeal.

"The breakdown was definitely a low point in our journey," said Jeremy, "But we had so many people counting on us, we couldn't end up as a tiger's tiffin. Changing tyres isn't your average diplomatic activity, but there was nothing we weren't prepared to do to get our people home."

After successfully changing the tyre, the team ploughed on to Cochin, arriving just in time to help the 260 stranded travellers onto an emergency Foreign Office flight – many of whom had spent between six and 12 hours on transport arranged by the High Commission to meet the flight.

Meanwhile, a group of 42 students and teachers from an international school, stranded in the hills of Ooty, also in the Western Ghats region, negotiated a tough 8-hour journey across state borders to meet an exhausted FCO staff member, who had driven 36 hours and 2,000km from Chennai to Kerala to meet the group and hand-deliver an emergency travel document to allow them to fly.

Protocol Assistant at the Deputy High Commission in Chennai, Rajesh Bhaskaran, who made the gruelling journey said: "Though the journey was arduous and riddled with multiple police checkpoints, at the end it was a hugely satisfying experience to help stranded British nationals from remote parts of southern India fly back home safely.

"But almost zero traffic during the lockdown made me feel like a 'King of the road' to deliver emergency travel documents in the nick of time."

Despite the extreme efforts to get British travellers home from Cochin, the team's work did not stop there, and on return to Bangalore, they supported a further three charter flights to get around 400 British travellers home. British eight-year-old Mayzia Richardson, from Derby, who was among the travellers, summed up the jubilation of travellers on their way home, singing 'A Million Dreams' from hit film the Greatest Showman at the check-in desk of her Foreign Office charter flight home.

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