

Parole Board Chief Executive's blog – May 2020

This week, the Parole Board has shared its 2020 to 2022 business plan which includes our strategic aims and priorities. It is worth noting, given the current climate, that while the current situation with Covid-19 will have a significant impact on the timings of the delivery of this plan, the aims and objectives still remain relevant, perhaps even more relevant, and the Parole Board continues to work towards the aims shared in the plan.

Firstly, I would like to reiterate that our top priority, as always, is to keep the public safe by only releasing someone when we are satisfied that imprisonment is no longer necessary for the protection of the public; and in undertaking fair and independent reviews ensure that continued detention is lawful.

We have 3 strategic aims that help us to achieve this:

1. We make independent, impartial and quality decisions
2. We work efficiently and effectively and provide value for money
3. We seek to be as open and transparent as possible

The Board makes independent, impartial and quality decisions by ensuring they are fair, respect the rights of the prisoner but always put public safety first. We operate like a court by making difficult, impartial decisions by considering evidence without fear or favour.

To help us make the best decisions we plan to:

- Increasingly use research to inform our understanding of, and approach to, risk;
- Provide members with a revised framework for decision making about risk;
- Provide more legal training and support
- Launch a rigorous and open recruitment processes to recruit new Parole Board members that represents the public that we serve.

To improve our efficiency and effectiveness we will:

- Ensure that all 26,000 cases heard per year are processed in a timely manner
- Ensure decisions are fully informed and based on all evidence available
- Improve the forecasting of our workload;
- Ensure we have better dossiers on prisoners and better case management and deployment of our resources.

Openness and transparency is also a huge part of what we do and we have made major strides in this area in recent times, which we are determined to build on. We already:

- Provide a service to produce around 100 summaries per month to explain

our decisions to victims, the public and the media.

- Publish an accessible annual report each year and regularly publish performance data so that we are accountable for our decisions and open about our performance.
- Publish a full listing of our members.
- Publish our reconsideration decisions.

Unfortunately the Parole Board is often misunderstood by victims, the public and sometimes in Parliament, because there is a lack of understanding of the work it does. I am therefore determined and committed to ensuring we raise greater awareness of the work we do. We strive to improve this so that all those affected by our decisions understand how we make them.

By April 2021 we will look to provide better information about Parole Board decision-making to prisoners, their families, victims and the public; and implement a robust system for providing information about individual cases; make parole hearings more open and provide better access to data.

As previously mentioned, the timescales above may vary due to the current public health situation but I would like to assure everyone that the Parole Board continues to process a huge number of cases despite the restrictions in place and everyone is and will work to achieve the goals set out in the business plan.

[West Midlands Interchange granted development consent](#)

Press release

Today, Monday 4 May 2020, the application for the West Midlands Strategic Rail Freight Interchange has been given development consent by the Secretary of State for Transport.



Development consent has been given for the development of a new Strategic

Rail Freight Interchange and other supporting infrastructure works near Junction 12 of the M6 motorway in South Staffordshire District.

The application was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration by Four Ashes Limited on the 03 August 2018 and accepted for examination on 24 August 2018. Following an examination during which the public, statutory consultees and interested parties were given the opportunity to give evidence to the Examining Authority, a recommendation was made to the Secretary of State on 27 November 2019.

The Planning Inspectorate's Chief Executive, Sarah Richards said:

"This is the 84th nationally significant infrastructure project to have been examined and decided within the timescales laid down in the Planning Act 2008. The Planning Inspectorate is committed to giving local communities the opportunity of being involved in the examination of projects that may affect them. Local people, the local authority and other interested parties were able to participate in a 6-month long examination. The Examining Authority listened and gave full consideration to local views before making their recommendation."

The decision, the recommendation made by the Examining Authority to the Secretary of State and the evidence considered by the Examining Authority in reaching its recommendation is publicly available on the [National Infrastructure Planning website](#).

ENDS

Journalists wanting further information should contact the Planning Inspectorate Press Office, on: 0303 444 5004 or 0303 444 5005 or email: Press.office@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Notes to editors:

The Planning Inspectorate, [National Infrastructure Programme of Projects](#) details the proposals which are anticipated to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate as applications in the coming months.

Published 4 May 2020

[Vacancy: Investigation Support Officer, Southampton](#)

News story

We are seeking a new member of the team to help provide support to MAIB inspectors while they are carrying out investigations.



Your responsibilities will include:

- Receiving and processing accident reports accurately and quickly so that they may be assessed by the Principal Inspector of Marine Accidents. This task also involves proactive monitoring of the HM Coastguard live online system allowing you to keep up with the progress of search and rescue activities.
- Database entry – information about the accidents reported needs to be recorded accurately and efficiently.
- Conducting follow-up enquiries with those involved in accidents and subsequent activities.
- Fulfilling general administrative tasks including monitoring the MAIB email box and responding accordingly, answering the 'phone, and dealing with post.
- Logistical support to a team of inspectors including making travel and accommodation bookings, and helping to establish contact with key stakeholders at the early stages of an investigation.

For further information about this position and how to apply see [Civil Service Jobs, Investigation Support Officer, Ref: 48174](#).

Closing date: Monday 18 May 2020

Published 4 May 2020

£14 million financial support for England's zoos unveiled

The government has today (Monday 4 May) launched [a £14 million support fund for zoos and aquariums](#) in the latest step to protect businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

The social distancing guidance, urging people to stay at home and save lives, has meant that zoos and aquariums have had to close temporarily for the safety of their staff and customers.

Zoos are undertaking valuable work at this time to ensure that their animal welfare standards are upheld and the animals' health needs continue to be met. This funding will help zoos cover costs relating to animal keeping such as feed, heating and security.

Animal welfare remains a top priority for this government and Defra will continue to work with some of the largest zoos to discuss additional concerns about funding in the longer term.

Lord Goldsmith, Animal Welfare Minister, said:

Even in these very difficult times, the government remains absolutely committed to high standards of animal welfare. We know that many of our zoos are facing real pressure as a consequence of coronavirus, and we have made support available to them, including business rates relief and the business interruption loan scheme.

This new Zoo Support Fund is designed to help those that need additional support to maintain the welfare of their animals. We are continuing to engage with some of the largest zoos to respond to their additional specific concerns.

Establishments covered by the Zoo Licensing Act will be able to bid for a portion of the £14 million that has been made available. Individual grant awards will be capped at £100,000.

The measures will support the English industry, in particular smaller zoos, during this challenging time and follow an unprecedented package of financial support already announced by the government.

Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Steve Barclay MP, said:

Zoos don't just provide a great family day out, but are vital for education, protecting endangered species and conservation work.

This fund, on top of the existing package of support we're offering

businesses, will mean that zoos across the country are helped to get through the coronavirus outbreak.

Dr Madelon Willemsen, CEO of the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA), said:

BIAZA zoos and aquariums have gone to extraordinary lengths to mitigate and adapt to the Covid-19 outbreak while maintaining excellent care for their animals despite the loss of income.

We are pleased to have worked with Defra in shaping this much needed crisis support for zoos and aquariums. We continue to work to ensure those most in need have access to this and other forms of support.

There are a number of support schemes already available to zoos, including business rates relief, the business interruption loan scheme and the job retention scheme. This is additional to other available relief such as VAT deferral.

[The UK and Egypt establish basis for cooperation during COVID-19](#)

The British Ambassador to Egypt, Sir Geoffrey Adams, has agreed with Minister of International Cooperation Dr. Rania Al-Mashat the key elements of the UK's engagement with Egypt in the two countries' shared fight against the Coronavirus.

In a letter addressed to Minister Al-Mashat, the British Ambassador set out the UK's support for the Ministry's efforts, in line with its People, Projects, and Purpose framework.

Under this framework, the Embassy and British businesses will work together to address the immediate medical needs of both Egypt and the UK. The UK has already provided training to over 250 Egyptian medical staff, equipping them with advanced skills in Intensive Care, Basic Life Support, and Cardiovascular Life Support. Vodafone has donated EGP10 million, while BP has offered EGP2 million to equip quarantine hospitals with ventilators and to support the treatment of COVID-19 patients. AstraZeneca has also donated 20,000 rapid Coronavirus-related tests worth USD100,000, in addition to 100,000 surgical masks, 100,000 gloves and 3,000 disposable gowns.

The UK is placing emphasis on support to healthcare provision, social protection, and the economic reform agenda in its programs in Egypt. On 20

January this year a [joint statement](#) was issued by the then Secretary of State for International Development of the United Kingdom and Minister Al-Mashat, outlining a number of areas of enhanced economic cooperation.

Meanwhile, the UK is playing a leading role in the global campaign against the Coronavirus. It is the G7 lead on support to vulnerable countries during the crisis. The UK has confirmed a responsive funding package of more than GBP 700m, including GBP 130m contribution to the UN, GBP 65m of which is allocated to the WHO. The UK is co-hosting the virtual Global Coronavirus Response Summit on 4 May, and will host the virtual Global Vaccines Summit on 4 June.