

'Helen's Law' returns to Parliament

The Prisoners (Disclosure of Information About Victims) Bill will place a legal duty on the Parole Board to consider the anguish caused by murderers who refuse to disclose the location of a victim's body when considering release.

The Bill, which is being reintroduced following the General Election, will also apply to paedophiles who take indecent images of children but refuse to reveal the identity of their victims.

Parole Board guidance is already clear that offenders who withhold information may still pose a risk to the public and could therefore be denied parole. 'Helen's Law' will however make it a legal requirement for the Parole Board to consider the withholding of information when deciding if an offender should be released.

The new law follows the tireless campaigning of Marie McCourt, mother of Helen McCourt who was murdered in 1988 but whose killer has never revealed her body's location.

Human rights legislation protects against arbitrary detention, and the proposed new law balances this with the need to keep the public safe. The proposals also take into account instances where, for example, a murderer may genuinely not know the location of a victim's body if it has been moved.

Notes to editors

- [The Prisoners \(disclosure of information about victims\) Bill](#) will put in statute, and therefore beyond doubt, the Parole Board's established practice of considering a failure by an offender to disclose specific information when deciding on parole for those convicted of murder, manslaughter, or taking, or making, indecent photographs of children.
 - Courts can already pass tougher sentences for murderers who deliberately conceal the location of a body.
 - The changes to the release test build on wider reforms to the parole system, announced last year, that will allow victims the opportunity to request the reconsideration of a release decision. This forms part of sweeping changes to bring more transparency and accountability to the parole process and improve the support to victims.
 - Applications for reconsideration will only be merited where there is a clear likelihood that the process may have been procedurally or legally flawed. It will not apply to decisions which are challenging and unpopular but have nevertheless clearly been carried out strictly in line with the lawful requirements and normal standards of practice for Parole Board members.
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[Northern Ireland seafood firm gears up for Christmas 2020](#)

While the rest of the world settles into the new year, Kilkeel-based seafood

company Rooney Fish is getting ahead of the Christmas 2020 rush and already taking orders from customers including Michelin-star restaurants, five-star hotels and supermarket chains for this year's festive season.

Established in 1975, the second-generation family business specialises in catching, preparing, farming and processing the finest seafood sustainably sourced from the Irish Sea. Its products include langoustines, crabs, whelks, scampi whole tails, scallops, lobsters and Millbay Oysters which are exclusively available from Rooney Fish.

Andrew Rooney, Managing Director of Rooney Fish, said:

We pride ourselves on the quality of our seafood, which is what sets us apart and has helped us build a global reputation. We have customers across Europe calling to book Christmas orders in the first week of January – never mind Valentine's Day or Easter.

There is growing demand for our products so we're looking to take our Millbay Oysters to Japan and Singapore. We now need a licence for another oyster farm which will help us employ more staff.

Selling overseas has always been an integral part of our business as it is crucial to boosting profit, and the support we've received from the UK Government has been incredible. I would encourage other businesses in Northern Ireland to consider exporting and find out how the Department for International Trade can help.

With 67 employees based in its 6,000sq metre high-tech processing plant in Kilkeel, exports to 15 countries across Asia, Europe, the Middle East and South America account for 99% of the company's turnover. Orders for next Christmas started rolling in last week from customers in Spain, France and Italy. By February, Rooney Fish expects to receive Christmas orders from South Korea.

Last October, the UK Government's Department for International Trade provided financial support for Rooney Fish to attend the China Fisheries and Seafood Expo in Shanghai. During the show, the business exhibited its products and met a buyer in Taiwan who ordered 50 tonnes of crab on the same day. Rooney Fish now sells 800 tonnes of crab to China each year and is looking to export its Millbay Oysters to Japan and Singapore in 2020.

International Trade Secretary, Liz Truss said:

It's great to see Rooney Fish off to a flying start in 2020 and taking advantage of the global demand for food and drink from Northern Ireland.

Thousands across the world will be looking forward to getting a taste of our high-quality seafood, and the UK Government will continue to champion businesses that export their goods to

countries around the globe.

Working closely with hundreds of local fishermen, Rooney Fish operates its own boats which can process fish at sea and is located near all major ports in Ireland to ensure optimum freshness. In 2014, the business opened its first oyster farm in Carlingford Lough, but now plans to get another farm and employ additional staff to meet increased demand.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Julian Smith added:

I welcome news of this local seafood company's continued growth in overseas markets and I wish them every success in their expansion across Asia.

Travelling around Northern Ireland and meeting local businesses I have been struck by the high quality of fresh produce on offer which is undoubtedly world class and is enjoyed across the globe.

In 2018, Rooney Fish became the first Northern Ireland winner of the Supreme Champion title in the Blas na hEireann, the Irish National Food Awards, for its Millbay Oysters which have also been awarded 3 Gold Stars from the Great Taste Awards.

Polish mining companies learn from the Coal Authority

Mining companies from Poland have visited the Coal Authority to find out more about our work to make a better future for people and the environment in coalfield areas.

They spent a morning at 2 of our sites as part of a 5-day study visit led by Ros Lund, mining specialist at the Department for International Trade, with Janusz Bil, director of energy and mining at the British Embassy in Warsaw. She said:

They've come to the UK because we're ahead of the curve, as the first major industrial nation to end deep coal mining, to learn from our experience.

Poland has got the luxury of planning for the future, so they're trying to take a measured approach and work out how to close their

coal mines well, considering all the social, economic and environmental implications.

We have already visited Markham Vale services and industrial park in Chesterfield, to see how coal areas can be restored, and found out more about capturing methane to generate electricity at the former Maltby Colliery in Yorkshire.

We wanted to come to the Coal Authority to learn more about how the government manages post-coal impacts.

They visited our [A Winning](#) scheme in Derbyshire, to see how we treat mine water to stop it polluting an important source of drinking water and prevent uncontrolled discharges to surface watercourses.

Touring the Mining Heritage Centre with Simon Leeming, our principal mining consultant and information manager.

There was also a tour of the Mining Heritage Centre at our Mansfield headquarters, to hear about our unique archive of historical coal mine plans, which still underpins so much of our work today, from producing mining reports for the housing market to dealing with public safety and subsidence hazards.

Nick Ethelstone, head of our commercial report and advisory services team, who liaised with the Department for International Trade and met the delegation at the previous day's Association of British Mining Equipment Companies annual conference 2019, said:

The Coal Authority has considerable experience in managing the legacy of coal mining across the UK and this was a fantastic opportunity to share the work we do with visitors from other countries.

The tours of one of our mine water treatment schemes and our information archive showed the breadth of work that we do and gave our visitors the opportunity to ask questions and discuss any learnings that could be applicable to their own work.

The delegation included representatives from Bogdanka, which operates some of the biggest coal mines in Poland, JSW, a major producer of coke in the European Union, and SRK, the Polish equivalent of the Coal Authority.