

Stranded fish rescued in Northumberland

Press release

The Environment Agency has rescued more than 1,300 fish as a Northumberland river naturally changed course following heavy rainfall, leaving the fish stranded.



Fish including salmon and minnow were rescued

Over recent weeks the Environment Agency has been developing an incident response plan following evidence the River Coquet was likely to 'avulse' into the Barrow Burn at Alwinton.

An avulsion is a natural process which happens when a river diverts from an established channel into a new permanent course. The switch of the Coquet into the Barrow Burn left a 300-metre stretch of the main river depleted of water and around 1,300 fish stranded.

Environment Agency fisheries specialists relocated fish in the cut off stretch – including salmon, lamprey, eel and minnow – back into the main river to ensure their survival. Some of the rescued fish were juvenile salmon and sea trout smolts on their migration to the sea, as well as younger fish of both species.

One of the rescued eels

The Environment Agency has been working with partners to prepare for the natural phenomenon, including Natural England, local tenant farmers, and ecologists for the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), which provides ecological advice to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and which originally reported the issue to the Environment Agency. The MOD owns land in the area.

One of the rescued young salmon

Coquet is a 'dynamic, wandering river'.

The Environment Agency's Alastair Laverty, a geomorphology expert, said:

The River Coquet between Thropton and Alwinton is a dynamic, wandering river, which maintains good connection to its floodplain and is still largely unmodified – a rarity for a river of this size in England. The switching of channels and the creation of new channels within the floodplain is an entirely normal occurrence.

Once we were aware of the potential for the river to move course, we began developing an incident response plan to reduce any impact on communities, the environment and wildlife, and as part of our response on the ground more than 1,000 fish were rescued.

The River Coquet is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and we are committed to retaining and restoring this complex and dynamic river to ensure it remains a good habitat for wildlife.

In March last year, the river set a new course through Caistron Lakes near Rothbury following a period of heavy rainfall. The Environment Agency and partners activated an incident response plan to reduce flood risk to the community and protect the environment.

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Rededication services for Irish soldiers lost in the Great War

The graves of Lieutenant (Lt) Frederic Hornby Lever Rushton MC and Private (Pte) John Martin Roberts, who died whilst serving with Irish regiments in the Great War, have been rededicated in France more than a hundred years after they died.

The services, which were organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), also known as the 'MOD War Detectives', were held at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) Montcornet Military Cemetery on 17 May and Queens Cemetery, Bucquoy, on 18 May.

Rosie Barron, JCCC case lead said:

"It has been a privilege to work with The Royal Irish Regiment and The Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry to organise these rededication services. Both Lt Rushton and Pte Roberts were amongst the first men sent to the Western Front in August 1914 as part of the British Expeditionary Force. Their fates were very different, but ultimately both men laid down their lives in service of others.

"Sharing this experience with their families brings their stories to life and ensures that their sacrifices are not forgotten."

Lt Rushton, known as Hornby, was killed aged 26 whilst leading an assault on an enemy machine gun position on 15 September 1914 at Vailly-sur-Aisne, in eastern France. Having already been treated for a wound to his shoulder, he had been urged not to go back into the attack but he had insisted on doing so. Lt Rushton was serving with 2nd Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment and had been on the Western Front since 14 August 1914 and already taken part in the Retreat from Mons where he is said to have saved the life of his Commanding Officer and the Adjutant. Members of Lt Rushton's battalion were given permission by a German Officer to recover his body. However, after the First World War Lt Rushton was found to be missing and he was commemorated on La Ferté-sous-Jouarre Memorial.

Captain Chris Rushton – Royal Irish Regiment – and great great nephew of Lt Rushton, attended the service alongside other family members. Crown copyright.

Lt Rushton's great nephew, Nigel Salt, who attended the rededication service at Montcornet Military Cemetery along with his family, said:

"We are particularly grateful that Hornby's grave has at last been identified and cannot thank enough all those involved that have made this possible. My Grandmother was totally devastated by the loss of both her brothers. This would at least have given her some consolation."

Pte Roberts, aged 30, served with The North Irish Horse. He arrived on the Western Front on 17 August 1914, just days after Lt Rushton and like Lt Rushton took part in the Retreat from Mons and the Battle of the Aisne in 1914. In March 1918 The North Irish Horse was dismounted and became a Cyclist Battalion. Having survived almost the duration of the First World War, Pte Roberts was killed in an attack near the River Ancre on 21 August 1918. He was commemorated on the Vis-en-Artois Memorial. Two of Private Roberts' brothers were also killed during the Great War, a third died of wounds following the conflict.

Captain Andrew Robertson of 'B' Squadron Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry, lays a wreath at the grave of Pte Roberts. Crown copyright.

The rededication service at Queens Cemetery, Bucquoy, was attended by members of Pte Roberts' family, including his great grandson, Craig Roberts. Craig

Roberts said:

“John Roberts’ involvement in WW1 was a long-forgotten story in my family. It wasn’t until I began researching my family tree that I discovered the sacrifice John and his brothers had made during the war. When I heard that John had been found, it made a person I had only read about online seem more real. Our family would like to give special thanks to Phillip Tardif, who investigated and linked John’s death and burial location, allowing John to be identified, thus enabling this ceremony to happen.”

The services were attended by representatives of the British and Irish Embassies as well as members of their families and serving soldiers of The Royal Irish Regiment and The Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry. They were conducted by the Reverend Dr Isaac Thompson MBE, TD, DL, HCF, Chaplain to The Royal Irish Regiment. As part of their engagement with MOD JCCC in the run up to today’s service, the Royal Irish Regiment realised that one of their soldiers was actually related to Lt Rushton. Captain Chris Rushton is Lt Rushton’s great-great-nephew. The soldier was invited to attend the service by his regiment and attended alongside other family members who were also present.

The Reverend Dr Thompson said:

“Lt Rushton, came from a village from near Wrexham, but joined the 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Regiment in 1909. In August 1914 he had reached the Front where he saved the life of his Commanding Officer and subsequently that of his Adjutant. Pte Roberts, was a young Irishman, born in Dublin. Both he and his two brothers, William and Albert, lost their lives in the conflict. How the family, back in Dublin, coped with the loss of three sons, one cannot begin to imagine.”

The location of Lt Rushton and Pte Roberts’ graves were discovered after researchers submitted evidence to CWGC suggesting that their final resting places could be identified. After further investigation by CWGC, the National Army Museum and JCCC, the findings of the researchers was confirmed by JCCC.

The headstones over their graves will now be replaced by the CWGC, who will care for their final resting places in perpetuity.

CWGC Commemorations Officer, David Avery, said:

“Thanks to the efforts of many and in the presence of their families, we are honoured to mark the graves of Lieutenant Frederic Hornby Lever Rushton MC and Private John Martin Roberts with new headstones bearing their names. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission ensures that all those who served and fell are commemorated by name and today we renew this commitment to caring for their graves, and their memory with dedication in perpetuity.”

Lasting Power of Attorney revamp to improve safety and efficiency

- New safeguards to protect against fraud and abuse
- Process to be made simpler, quicker and easy to use
- New digital service to reduce application errors and speed up registrations

Ministers have set out plans to transform the lasting power of attorney (LPA) system – making it quicker to use, easier to access and even more secure from fraud.

Under the proposals, people will be able to make an LPA completely online for the first time – bringing it in line with other government services such as applying for a divorce. The current paper-based system will continue to operate meaning people can choose an accessible process that's best for their specific needs.

Crucially, the reforms will bolster safeguards to protect vulnerable people from abuse or fraud. The plans include new identification checks which would require official documents or information such as a driving licence, passport or Government Gateway account as part of a strengthened verification process.

The number of registered LPAs has increased drastically in recent years to more than 6 million, but the process of making one retains many paper-based features that are over 30 years old.

Today's announcement follows a government consultation which sought views on modernising the system. The proposals have been developed following engagement with a wide range of stakeholders such as Age UK, the Law Society, and the National Mental Capacity Forum, to ensure that they work for those who rely on LPAs to manage their affairs in later life.

Justice Minister, Tom Pursglove MP, said:

A lasting power of attorney provides comfort and reassurance to millions of people that decisions will be made in their best interests should they lose capacity.

Our reforms will make the system easier to access, simpler and even more secure from fraud. This forms part of our plans to harness technology across government and provide better services to the public.

An LPA is a legal document which allows people (a donor) to appoint someone else (an attorney) to make decisions about their welfare, money, or property. It's an important tool that allows people to choose someone they know and

trust to make decisions for them were they to lose capacity in future. They are often used by older people but can be made by anyone over the age of 18.

The service is operated by the Office of the Public Guardian and currently handles more than 19 million pieces of paper annually. The introduction of a new digital process will improve the efficiency and sustainability of the organisation and reduce its carbon footprint.

Digitisation will also help reduce errors from donors, attorneys and others involved in the process by ensuring these can be picked up and fixed early on – ultimately helping to slash waiting times.

Stuart Howard, Interim Public Guardian for England and Wales, said:

Lasting powers of attorney are vital in helping people plan for the future and stay in control of their decisions.

These reforms will enable us to modernise the process – ensuring our service is fit for the future, safe and simple to use, and can be accessed online.

The government has also committed to looking further into how the new digital system could improve the witnessing process and make it simpler. It would give donors more time to focus on the important decisions in the process such as who they are giving powers to and the scope of those powers.

Notes to editors

Chancellor sets out further economic support for Ukraine at G7 meeting in Bonn

- Rishi Sunak also discussed how global partners can continue to work together to soften the war's impact on the global economy
- He will also urge G7 counterparts to maintain momentum behind and deliver the historic agreement on global tax reform – ensuring companies pay their fair share of tax in the countries in which they operate

The Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak confirms that the UK stands ready to guarantee up to \$50 million for further financing to Ukraine, to help

ensure the continued provision of electricity to its citizens.

The Chancellor attended meetings with G7 partners today and will continue to do so tomorrow, alongside the Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey. They discussed efforts to support Ukraine and the ways in which the war is adding to pressures on the global economy, including impacts on the cost of living in the UK.

Today, Rishi Sunak announced the UK's commitment to guarantee \$50million, of further financing to Ukraine from the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, which is headquartered in London. This comes on top of the \$950m in loan guarantees that the UK has already committed to significantly scale up World Bank lending to the Government of Ukraine to help meet urgent fiscal needs.

This guarantee will be used by the EBRD to provide further financing to the Ukrainian electricity grid operator, Ukrenergo to support continued provision of electricity to the brave Ukrainian people, subject to approval by Parliament.

This funding forms part of the significant economic, humanitarian and military support the UK has committed to Ukraine, totalling well over \$3 billion.

The Chancellor also discussed the shared challenges facing the global economy, including the rising cost of living globally, and the acute challenges faced by developing economies including heightened food insecurity.

He pushed his partners in the G7 to ensure that the sanctions announced so far are being urgently implemented and strongly enforced to exert maximum cost on Putin and his regime.

Ahead of the meetings, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak said:

I remain steadfast with my G7 partners in standing with Ukraine. I am pleased to confirm up to \$50million in UK guarantees for EBRD critical support in Ukraine. This will help Ukraine continue to provide electricity to its citizens as they fight for their freedom.

It's clear that Putin's barbaric and illegal invasion of Ukraine has not only had a devastating humanitarian impact on Ukraine; it is also causing significant disruption to the global economy, the impacts of which are being felt across the G7, including here at home in the UK.

I am determined to work with my G7 partners to confront these shared challenges.

Tomorrow, the Chancellor will also call for progress on the implementation of

the international tax agreement that was struck last year during the UK's presidency of the G7. This historic global tax reform will ensure companies pay their fair share of tax in the countries in which they operate. In Bonn, the Chancellor will encourage his partners to maintain momentum and collaborate to deliver on the agreement as swiftly as possible.

Further information

- Whilst in Bonn for the G7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting, the Chancellor will meet with his partners for working sessions over today and tomorrow and will have bilats with some of the attending finance ministers.
- The UK's combined economic, humanitarian and military package of support, totalling over \$3 billion comprises:
 - i) around \$500 million in economic and humanitarian grant support for Ukraine. This comprises: a £220 million (c.\$290m) package of humanitarian aid, making the UK a leading bilateral humanitarian donor; a c.£75m (\$100m) fiscal support grant, channelled through the World Bank Trust Fund; a £100 million (c.\$130m) grant to support Ukraine's energy security and reforms,
 - ii) Almost \$1 billion in guarantees on World Bank lending to Ukraine, unlocking additional WB financing on a 1:1 basis over the coming months. These financial guarantees are subject to parliamentary approval.
 - iii) \$50 million in potential guarantees on lending to Ukraine by the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). This will be used to guarantee \$100 million of EBRD lending to Ukrenergo. This guarantee is subject to parliamentary approval.
 - iv) Over \$1.5 billion in military aid, including thousands of anti-tank weapons
- The G7 is also expected to discuss international solutions to combat carbon leakage and financing for pandemic preparedness.

[Report by OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media: UK response, May](#)

2022

Thank you Mr Chair, I wish to thank the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM), dear Teresa Ribeiro, for your report.

The report had a necessary and justified focus on the impact of Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. It was another stark reminder of what has been happening over the last 85 days.

It reminded us of the journalists that have been killed in Russia's premeditated and unjustified war. Like the RFOM, we offer our heartfelt condolences to their family and friends.

We are also reminded of the reports of the disappearance, detention and abduction of Ukrainian journalists or their relatives by the Russian military. We recall, with horror, the reported case of the Ukrainian interpreter and fixer for Radio France left in an icy cellar, repeatedly beaten with an iron bar and rifle butts, tortured with electricity, deprived of food for 48 hours and subjected to mock execution.

The three eminent independent experts who authored the recent ["Moscow Mechanism" report](#) referenced that case when noting they had "received several credible reports according to which Russian forces arrested civilians, including journalists, without any procedure, and ill-treated them by methods that amount to torture." The experts' conclusion? That "this constitutes a war crime."

We are also reminded of the case of Vladyslav, a freelance journalist sentenced to six years in prison on politically motivated charges, who is reported to have been mistreated and abused while in prison. Yesterday, the RFoM highlighted the abduction of Oleksii Vorontsov, engineer of public broadcaster UA:Kherston, and, rightly, called for his immediate release.

Mr Chair, the RFOM's report today also highlights that inside the Russian Federation we are seeing "the most severe crackdown on free speech and media freedom of the last 25 years." The impact of this crackdown is also felt in the temporarily Russian controlled territories of Ukraine, including illegally annexed Crimea, where Ukrainians are subject to the ever-increasing restrictions on media freedom imposed through Russia's legislation. The actions of the Russian Government are at odds with their obligations under international law and their OSCE commitments. They are at odds with a proper functioning democracy. OSCE participating States agreed in Budapest in 1994 that "freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and a basic component of a democratic society". People must be allowed to discuss and debate issues freely, to challenge their governments, and to make informed political decisions. The media crackdown in Russia, as described by the RFOM in her report, means that such a free and informed debate is simply not happening in Russia.

Mr Chair, I was not surprised that, just before my intervention, Russia that

criticised the RFoM's work and her report. That's because they know, in their heart of hearts, as we do, that facts matter. And that in protecting and supporting freedom of expression and media freedom, the RFoM helps defend and promote facts. This is in stark contrast to the Russian Government and their approach of misinformation and disinformation.

We also note the RFoM's comment that "the dreadful freedom of expression and media freedom situation in Belarus again warrants separate mentioning". Like the RFoM we remain worried that journalists are being sentenced, arrested or detained for simply doing their work. And that "the practice of continued arrests and convictions of journalists on trumped-up charges is a grave danger to media freedom in the country". The actions of the Lukashenko regime are not compatible with Belarus' international obligations and OSCE commitments on freedom of expression and media freedom.

The RFoM's report highlights the importance of freedom of expression and media freedom to the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. We believe the slogan to commemorate 25 years of the RFoM – "no security without media freedom" – is particularly apt at this time of crisis in the OSCE region. Promoting media freedom across the whole OSCE region is a priority for the UK. That is why we greatly value the RFoM's important work across the whole region, including in the Western Balkans and Central Asia, and on key topics such as the safety of journalists, on restrictive measures at the national level that limit media freedom, and on the dangers of misinformation and disinformation.

Teresa – thank you for your efforts and that of your office. Your work is of the utmost importance as we collectively address the terrible impact of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. The United Kingdom continues to offer our full support for the important work undertaken by you, and your excellent staff.

Thank you Mr Chair