

# Natural England and Environment Agency launch joint legal action in response to River Lugg damage

Press release

Banks of the River Lugg were damaged in December 2020 causing suspected significant and long-term ecological harm.



The River Lugg in Herefordshire, pre December 2020

- Natural England and the Environment Agency are today launching legal action against the landowner
- The area is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which means permissions need to be granted before work can take place

Natural England and the Environment Agency have announced today they are beginning legal action against a landowner for damage to a protected area of the River Lugg in Herefordshire.

This follows a joint Natural England and Environment Agency in-depth investigation into ecological harm to the 1.5 kilometre of the protected stretch of the River Lugg. This investigation followed reports of unauthorised activity including dredging and changing the shape (profiling) of the riverbank in Kingsland in Herefordshire in December 2020.

This has been a serious and complex investigation which has taken a considerable length of time to complete.

The charges being brought against the landowner relate to:

- unconsented operations and causing damage to a Site of Special Scientific Interest
- carrying out activities within 8 metres of the River Lugg which were likely to cause damage to or endanger the stability of the river
- causing a water discharge activity, namely a discharge of silt into the

## River Lugg

- failing to take reasonable precaution to prevent agricultural pollution from land management and cultivation practices on agricultural land
- wilfully disturbing spawn or spawning fish, or any bed, bank or shallow on which any spawn or spawning fish may be
- breach of a stop notice

The charges also relate to further works which are alleged to have been carried out by the landowner in December 2021.

Court action will now follow at Kidderminster Magistrates' Court.

Oliver Harmar, Chief Operating Officer at Natural England said:

The decimation of this section of the River Lugg has been devastating to the local environment and to local people, destroying the habitats of iconic wildlife such as otters, kingfisher and salmon. It was heart-breaking to see this beautiful riverside illegally damaged.

The River Lugg, post 2020

The River Lugg, post 2020

The area is protected as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to its importance for nature. Consent is required before any works are carried out within a SSSI to the river which had not been granted.

[A press release on the unauthorised work was issued on 7 December 2020.](#)

Natural England is responsible for ensuring protection of SSSI areas and the Environment Agency is responsible for flood risk management, fish and spawning and the way rivers function.

Natural England has regulatory powers to prevent damage taking place to SSSIs and to take appropriate enforcement action, including prosecuting offenders where damage occurs.

The Environment Agency has powers to prosecute under the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016; Water Resources Act 1991; and the Salmon and Fresh Water Fisheries Act 1975.

The hearing will be held at Kidderminster Magistrates' Court on 18 May 2022.

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## £113 million UK trade boost supports major roadworks in Cameroon

- UK Export Finance provides £113 million of financial support for the Cameroonian Government, boosting bilateral trade and supporting jobs
- Deal unlocks millions of pounds worth of business for UK suppliers to install and upgrade new roads that will link the capital with vital trade ports
- Data shows UK trade with Cameroon increased by 40% in the last year as the UK marks the first anniversary of its trade agreement with Cameroon

A £113 million finance package has been agreed with Cameroon to help UK businesses complete essential roadworks that will unlock the country's economic potential.

UK trade with Cameroon is on the rise, with the value of trade between the two nations reaching £231 million at the end of 2021, up 40% on the previous year.

Today marks the first anniversary of the United Kingdom signing its [Economic Partnership Agreement with Cameroon](#), ensuring that British and Cameroonian businesses could continue to trade freely without any additional tariffs or barriers.

The new deal underwritten by UK Export Finance (UKEF) will support the expansion of the Douala East Entrance Road, which connects the capital in Cameroon with vital trading ports. When completed the expanded road will dramatically improve the transport of goods in Cameroon and strengthen economic ties with landlocked neighbours Chad and the Central African Republic.

**Mike Freer MP, Minister for Exports, said:**

Africa is one of the most exciting continents on which to do business. That's why this government worked so quickly to ensure trade agreements were rolled over and exports could continue unabated.

This new deal backed by UK Export Finance is a huge boost to the UK's growing trade with Cameroon. It will help keep the wheels of trade turning and provide opportunities for British companies to showcase their world-class expertise.

UKEF will provide a mix of Buyer Credit and Direct Lending support worth £113

million (Euro 135 million) and the transaction was arranged by Standard Chartered Bank.

UKEF can help foreign countries with financial support to make their projects happen, if they commit to sourcing goods and services from the UK. This helps open new doors for world-class British suppliers to trade overseas.

International company Magil Construction will undertake the works on the Douala Road project with crucial assistance from the UK supply chain, which will support jobs and boost trade in the UK.

Magil has strong credentials in Cameroon, working on some of the largest projects in the country. They have recently completed the construction of the Douala Soccer Stadium used at the recent African Cup of Nations.

**Ralph Tropea, Executive Advisor at Magil Construction, said:**

We are grateful for the assistance provided by UKEF with its team of professionals, at every level, to make this deal for the Douala East Entrance Road Project a reality. Magil Construction is proud partner in this Project which is a testament to economic and business cooperation by the UK, Cameroon and stakeholders from conception to construction.

**Mustafa Sajjad Hussain, Executive Director, Structured Export Finance, Standard Chartered Bank, said:**

We are very pleased to support the Republic of Cameroon by structuring a competitive financing package to deliver critical infrastructure in the country. The newly restored road will bring social and economic benefits to Douala's inhabitants and communities in the surrounding areas, helping to build long-term sustainable growth in central Africa.

UKEF has up to £2 billion available to support UK exports to Cameroon and can continue to back projects in Cameroon with its financial support.

**Contact**

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**[UK strengthens ban on Russia aircraft and introduces new trade sanctions](#)**

News story

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss has announced a new suite of aviation sanctions.



- New powers to detain Russian aircraft and remove aircraft belonging to designated individuals and entities from the UK register
- Ban on the export of aviation and space-related goods and technology, including technical assistance
- Further ban on UK companies providing insurance and re-insurance services in relation to these goods and technology

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss has announced a new suite of aviation sanctions giving the UK Government new powers to detain any Russian aircraft here in the UK. We have also strengthened the current overflight and landing ban on Russian aircraft, laying new legislation today to make it a criminal offence for any Russian aircraft to fly or land in the UK.

The ban includes any aircraft owned, operated or chartered by anyone connected with Russia or designated individuals or entities, and will include the power to detain any aircraft owned by persons connected with Russia.

The new powers will also allow the Government to remove aircraft belonging to designated Russian individuals and entities from the UK aircraft register.

Additional trade measures, also introduced today, will prevent UK exports of aviation or space-related items and technology to Russia, including related services such as insurance and reinsurance services. This means cover is withdrawn on existing policies and UK insurers and reinsurers will be unable to pay claims in respect of existing policies in these sectors.

These new measures will further tighten the growing economic pressure on Russia and ensures the UK is in line with sanctions imposed by our allies.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

Banning Russian flagged planes from the UK and making it a criminal offence to fly them will inflict more economic pain on Russia and those close to the Kremlin.

We will continue to support Ukraine diplomatically, economically and defensively in the face of Putin's illegal invasion, and work to isolate Russia on the international stage.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Putin must fail and so we were one of the first countries to ban Russian aircraft and today we are going even further by making it a criminal offence for Russian aircraft to operate in UK airspace.

We will always work to deny Putin and his cronies the right to continue as normal while innocent Ukrainians suffer.

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## [Managing Defence in the Wider Security Context training programme in Suva: opening speech by Paul Welsh](#)

Ladies and Gentleman,

I welcome all of you to the Managing Defence in the Wider Security Context training programme.

This course follows on from two successful training programmes that we funded on Strategic Leadership where we brought together men and women from across a range of government departments and agencies. And is good to see from the participants list from this programme that we again have diverse representation.

The Deputy High Commissioner, Paul Welsh opened the Managing Defence in the Wider Security Context training programme.

Although the words Defence and Security are in the title of this course, I have no doubt that many of the ideas, principles and models covered in this week are of relevance to all of you, not only those of you working directly in the defence or security sectors. The delivery of these courses in Fiji and elsewhere is a demonstration of Britain's commitment to the Pacific region, of our common values and our deep rooted relationships. I thought carefully about what I might cover this morning that would be relevant to the diverse range of participants. I have decided to pick out a few issues that I believe are of interest to all public servants. The first thing is strategic context. As policy formulators, managers and leaders, we all need to be aware of the external influences and drivers that affect our work and the work of our departments.

We need to lift our heads and scan the horizon to spot potential problems and opportunities. These might be political, economic, social, environmental or legal – to name just a few. Let me give you an example. Let's imagine that I am a Police Superintendent in Manchester in the North of England.

I have been asked to plan the policing operation for a large demonstration in central Manchester next Saturday. The demonstration is expected to attract up to a quarter of a million people for a rally in support of Ukraine. It will be essential that I approach this task with a good understanding of the strategic context. I need to think about the political background to this rally. I know that people are coming to protest for and in peace. But I know that emotions are running high and that there is widespread anger towards Russia as the perpetrators of the aggression against Ukrainians.

I need to be ready for emotions spilling over, not likely into violence but into acts that might disrupt the running of the city.

I also need to be politically smart in the way that we police the event. Public and political opinion is overwhelmingly supportive of Ukraine.

I need to be reactive to that prevailing political and social mood by policing the rally in as facilitative way as possible.

I also need to have an eye on public perceptions. I need to think about media coverage, the world's eyes.

If I end up with a popular protest in support of a high profile cause turning violent and police having to intervene, that's going to be bad news for me and my police force.

I need to think about the law. My force's actions are governed by human rights law and the right to freedom of assembly.

We take a human rights based approach to policing. I need to balance that with my responsibility to guarantee people's safety. I could go on. But I think you get the idea. As a senior police officer, I need to scan what is a complex strategic horizon and understand how a range of factors could affect my task, for good or for bad.

Another issue I wanted to focus on is collaboration. How do I work with a range of partners and stakeholders to formulate policy or deliver services. As with strategic thinking, this is about recognising that very often we will need to work in partnership with colleagues from different parts of our organisation, other government departments, with civil society or sometimes with other countries. Collaborating and partnering is essentially a recognition that rarely can we deliver our priorities alone. As an example of this I refer to a programme that we have in the British Government called the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund or CSSF.

This is a cross government fund which supports and delivers activity to prevent instability and conflict that threaten UK interests. It uses a whole of government approach to national and international security challenges. It brings together staff from the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Defence, the

Development Ministry and the National Security Department.

It was designed out of an understanding that our policies and interventions are improved if we combine various skills, experience and disciplines. And that to win the competition, you need to bring in a range of players, from a range of teams. The third issue that I 'd like to touch on is accountability and transparency. As public servants in a democracies, good governance means that we have an obligation to explain decision making and to justify our conduct. We report to politicians, the elected representatives of the people. But we are ultimately accountable to citizens. As civil or public servants we are serving the people.

There has over many years been a gradual erosion of public trust in western democracies and there is an increasing demand in many countries for more direct and explicit accountability relations between governments and citizens, civil society and the media. This has for example led in many countries, including my own, to the introduction of Freedom of Information legislation where members of the public are entitled in law to request information from public authorities. This is not always comfortable for public servants. But to my mind, it comes down to an essential truth of democratic governance; we are not spending our money, we are spending public money. We do so with public consent and are accountable to them for the way we spend that money.

I wanted to finish by saying something about Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Let us be clear, this is not a conflict that has happened by accident. Russia's invasion of Ukraine was an unprovoked, needless and premeditated attack against a sovereign democratic state. The Russian government's actions are reprehensible and illegal. They are in direct contravention of the United Nations Charter – the UN Secretary General himself has been clear about this. Thousands of innocents are being killed, millions are feeling their homes. And if I were to set Russia's invasion in the context of some of the issues that will be covered in this course, I ask myself a few questions.

To what extent has Russia thought about the strategic context of its invasion?

Did it think about its obligations in international law?

Did it think about the mass humanitarian devastation that would inevitably follow?

Did it think about the huge act of economic self harm that it would do to itself?

Did it ask itself what its own people wanted. Did it feel accountable to them or to anyone?

If they had exercised strategic judgement and awareness, we might avoided the tragedy that is now unfolding.

So Ladies and Gentleman. I will leave it there.



I hope that you will find this week's training to be informative, inspiring and that you will open your minds to new ideas. I hope the you will develop friendships and working relationships that you can take back your departments.

I hope that you enjoy yourselves.

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## Major law changes to protect people from scam adverts online

- Consultation launched on wider reform of online advertising regulations include greater powers for regulators to tackle harmful, offensive and misleading adverts
- Influencers failing to declare payment for promoting products could face tougher penalties

Social media sites and search engines will be forced to stamp out fraudsters and scammers on their platforms as the government strengthens its pioneering internet safety laws.

The move comes as the government also launches a consultation as part of a wider overhaul of how online advertising is regulated in the UK, including proposals to improve transparency and accountability and tackle harmful, fraudulent and misleading adverts.

Together the measures aim to boost people's trust and confidence in being online by making sure the UK's rules and regulations keep pace with rapid advances in technology.

A new legal duty will be added to the Online Safety Bill requiring the largest and most popular social media platforms and search engines to prevent paid-for fraudulent adverts appearing on their services.

The change will improve protections for internet users from the potentially devastating impact of fake ads, including where criminals impersonate celebrities or companies to steal people's personal data, peddle dodgy financial investments or break into bank accounts.

Separately, the government is launching a consultation on proposals to tighten the rules for the online advertising industry. This would bring more of the major players involved under regulation and create a more transparent, accountable and safer ad market.

Harmful or misleading adverts, such as those promoting negative body images, and adverts for illegal activities such as weapons sales, could be subject to

tougher rules and sanctions. Influencers failing to declare they are being paid to promote products on social media could also be subject to stronger penalties.

Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries said:

We want to protect people from online scams and have heard the calls to strengthen our new internet safety laws. These changes to the upcoming Online Safety bill will help stop fraudsters conning people out of their hard-earned cash using fake online adverts.

As technology revolutionises more and more of our lives the law must keep up. Today we are also announcing a review of the wider rules around online advertising to make sure industry practices are accountable, transparent and ethical – so people can trust what they see advertised and know fact from fiction.

Security Minister Damian Hinds:

Crimes like romance and investment fraud leave lifelong scars on their victims and can completely destroy their finances and ability to trust. Organised crime groups have discovered new ways to take full advantage of people, using increasingly sophisticated methods which would trick even the most scrupulous of individuals.

We know that these crimes are on the rise and with all of us spending longer online, criminals are spotting their opportunities to abuse people's trust and trick them more and more.

The changes that we are announcing today mean that online and social media companies will have to acknowledge these issues and take robust action to combat the scourge of online fraud, and take more responsibility to protect their users from this high-harm crime. Innocent victims must not be taken advantage of and conned online by fraudsters.

Martin Lewis, founder of MoneySavingExpert.com and the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute, whose face is among the most used by scammers in the UK, said:

I am thankful the Government has listened to me and the huge numbers of other campaigners – across banks, insurers, consumer groups, charities, police and regulators – who've been desperate to ensure scam adverts are covered by the Online Safety Bill. We are amidst an epidemic of scam adverts. Scams don't just destroy people's finances – they hit their self-esteem, mental health and even leave some considering taking their own lives.

The Government now accepting the principle that scam adverts need to be included, and that firms who are paid to publish adverts need to be responsible for them, is a crucial first step. Until now, only user-generated scams were covered – which risked pushing more scam ads, incentivising criminals to shift strategy. Yet it is a complex area. Now we and others need to analyse all elements of this new part of the Bill, and work with Government and Parliament to close down the hiding places or gaps scammers can exploit.

Mark Steward, Executive Director of Enforcement and Market Oversight, Financial Conduct Authority said:

We welcome that the Online Safety Bill will now require the largest platforms to tackle fraudulent advertising. We have been clear about the need for legislation and appreciate the Government's positive engagement on this. We look forward to working closely with the Government and regulatory partners as they finalise and implement the details of the draft Bill.

## **Online Safety Bill – fraudulent advertising duty**

Under the current draft of the Online Safety Bill, search engines and platforms which host user-generated content, video-sharing or live streaming will have a duty of care to protect users of their services from fraud committed by other users. This includes 'catfishing' romance scams and fake stock market tips – posted by people in images, comments or videos.

Today the government is adding a new duty to the bill which will bring fraudulent paid-for adverts on social media and search engines into scope, whether they are controlled by the platform itself or an advertising intermediary.

These companies will need to put in place proportionate systems and processes to prevent (or minimise in the case of search engines) the publication and/or hosting of fraudulent advertising on their service and remove it when they are made aware of it.

It will mean companies have to clamp down on ads with unlicensed financial promotions, fraudsters impersonating legitimate businesses and ads for fake companies. It includes 'boosted' social media posts by users which they pay to have promoted more widely.

The regulator Ofcom will set out further details on what platforms will need to do to fulfil their new duty in codes of practice. This could include making firms scan for scam adverts before they are uploaded to their systems, measures such as checking the identity of those who wish to publish advertisements, and ensuring financial promotions are only made by firms authorised by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA).

Ofcom will oversee whether companies have adequate measures in place to

fulfil the duty, but will not assess individual pieces of content, in keeping with the approach taken in the rest of the bill. It will have the power to hold companies to account by blocking their services in the UK or issuing heavy fines of up to £18 million or ten per cent of annual turnover.

## **Online Advertising Programme (OAP)**

The government is today launching a public consultation on its Online Advertising Programme (OAP).

The content and placement of online advertisements is currently overseen by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) under a system of self-regulation. But rapid technological developments have transformed the scale and complexity of online advertising leading to an increase in consumer harm.

Adverts seeking to defraud such as investment scams and promotions for fraudulent products and services including fake ticketing, which in many cases involves fake celebrity endorsement, have proliferated online.

People are also being targeted through legitimate-looking adverts that contain hidden malware. When clicked on they allow hackers to commit malicious cyber security attacks such as 'cryptojacking' – the unauthorised use of people's devices to mine for cryptocurrency.

Elsewhere there is evidence of online adverts selling items prohibited in UK law, such as prescription medicines and counterfeit fashion, misleading adverts misrepresenting the product or service they offer, and influencers failing to reveal sponsorship arrangements with companies in their posts.

The programme will look at the current regulations and regulators including whether they are properly empowered and funded. It will consider the whole supply chain and whether those within it should do more to combat harmful advertising, including ad-funded platforms such as Meta, Snap, Twitter and Tik Tok and intermediaries such as Google, TheTradeDesk and AppNexus.

Options include strengthening the current self-regulation approach or creating a new statutory regulator with tough enforcement powers including:

- Rule-making powers such as setting mandatory codes of conduct and enforcing them with fines and the ability to block and ban advertisers which repeatedly break the rules.
- Increased scrutiny across the supply chain related to high-risk advertising such as the promotion of products related to alcohol or weight loss. Companies could be required to demonstrate they are taking care to protect users – for example avoiding targeting vulnerable groups.
- Increased scrutiny of advertisers which repeatedly breach codes of conduct and more checks on firms and individuals placing adverts and buying ad space. This could include requiring third-party intermediaries or platforms to make advertisers self declare an interest in placing high-risk advertising such as age restricted ads.
- Information gathering and investigatory powers such as the power to

audit and request transparency reports from companies and request data from them.

**ENDS**

### **Notes to editors**

- The Online Advertising Programme consultation will be open for 12 weeks from Wednesday 9 March 2022. The government intends to respond to the consultation and outline proposals to reform online advertising later this year.
- The National Cyber Security Centre launched the Suspicious Email Reporting service in April 2020 to help people report suspicious emails, including those claiming to offer coronavirus services. As part of the Online Safety Bill, we are making sure that online providers prioritise tackling fraud and doing everything they can to protect members of the public using the platforms. Since the launch, the NCSC have shut down over 76,000 scams across 139,000 websites.

### **Facts and figures on the advertising industry:**