

Question

 **Dr Luke Evans** >
Conservative
Bosworth Commons

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of trespassing laws on protection of the countryside.

Answer

 **Trudy Harrison** >
Conservative
Copeland Commons

Answered on

23 May 2023

The Home Office is responsible for such laws. Under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, the police have powers to direct trespassers who are residing on land to leave. Failure to comply with the direction is a criminal offence. Through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, the Government strengthened these powers of direction to:

- o broaden the types of harm that are covered by the police power to direct trespassers away, to include damage, disruption and distress;
- o increase the period in which trespassers directed away from the land must not return from three months to 12 months; and
- o enable police to direct people away from land that forms part of a highway.

No recent assessment has been undertaken by Defra on the adequacy of these laws with respect to trespassing on private land for the purposes of recreation.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 provides access across large parts of the English countryside and a right to roam across open access land, giving the public a right of access to most areas of mountain, moor, heath, down, registered common land and coastal margin. This is subject to certain restrictions and behaviours set out in the Act including those considered to be a criminal offence.

Public Spaces Protection Orders and the use of byelaws can also be used to address local issues to protect the countryside where it is reasonable and proportionate to do so.

Question

 **Sir Bill Wiggin** >
Conservative
North Herefordshire Commons

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential merits of merging Natural England with the Environment Agency.

Answer

 **Trudy Harrison** >
Conservative
Copeland Commons

Answered on

19 June 2023

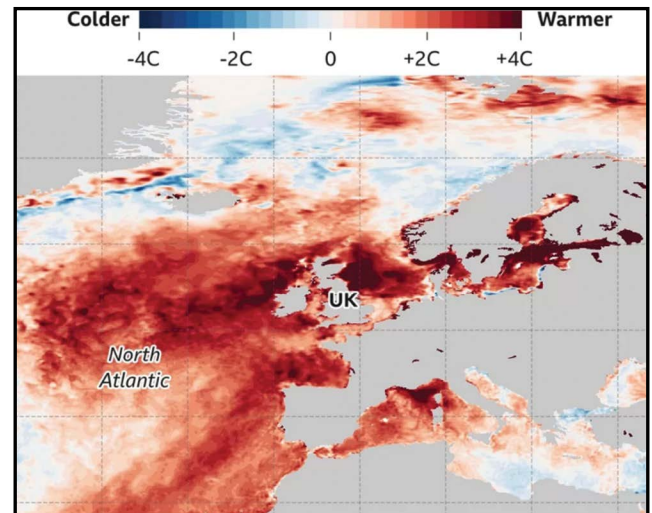
Defra's arm's-length bodies (ALBs), including Natural England and the Environment Agency, provide vital services to communities and businesses across the country, while protecting and enhancing the environment.

The department is not currently assessing a merger of the two organisations. Defra and its ALBs are continuing to work collaboratively to ensure that we are equipped to drive nature recovery and deliver against this Government's ambitious outcomes on Net Zero, climate adaptation and the environment.

local police say they will not respond to complaints about the use of boats on rivers unless there are additional factors.

In answer to Sir Bill Wiggin (Con, N Herefords) Harrison dismisses any merger between the EA and Natural England, which currently overlap much of their work and provide two successive related hurdles to be addressed by anyone wanting to do anything significant around water.

Caroline Lucas (Green, Brighton Pavilion) has asked yet more questions on access, of which two are included here. Harrison replied that the Government do not know if their policy of relying on access agreements works at all and apparently have no interest in finding out or stating the legal basis for the policy, the 'don't know, don't care' approach, in sharp contrast to their approach to walkers.



Warmer seas

Sea surface temperatures this year have been up to 4°C higher than the 1981 - 2016 average, particularly to the east of northern England and southern Scotland and off the Western Isles, which have some of the highest rises in the world. Some of this is human induced. For example, cleaning up shipping exhausts means that there are less particles in the air to reflect incoming sunrays back into space. Weak trade winds this year have resulted in less Sahara sand dust in the atmosphere to reflect back rays. Other causes are not known. A particularly high rate of rise runs from the mid Atlantic ridge with its potential for volcanic activity to the Gulf of Finland but must be atmospheric rather than marine as the warmth cuts across Scotland rather than going round it and reaches inland lakes up into Russia.

Jellyfish sightings reported to the Marine Conservation Society were up 32% this year, perhaps due to warmer water, perhaps to more people out and reporting in warmer weather, although scientific knowledge of their number cycle is poor. West coasts, especially Cornwall and Wales, were most affected. The usually harmless barrel jellyfish were particularly noticed, being very large. Crystal jellyfish and the dangerous Portuguese man o' war were seen and compass jellyfish numbers increased. There were also turtle sightings, including the large leatherbacks.



Paddlers have been helping the CRT clear rivers of floating pennywort clogging canals and rivers, a plant imported by garden centres to enhance ponds. However, it spreads very quickly from any small piece not removed so this cleaning can be a thankless task.