

# Press release: Environment Agency commits to fight against modern slavery

- Over 100 EA officers trained to spot signs of exploitation
- Two thirds of victims reported to have worked in waste industry
- Anti-Slavery Day raising awareness of need to eradicate modern slavery

The Environment Agency (EA) has committed to working with police and enforcement agencies to eradicate modern day slavery from the waste and recycling industry by training officers to spot signs of exploitation during site inspections.

Latest figures from anti-slavery charity, Hope for Justice, show that two-thirds of victims are reported to have worked within the waste industry. In response, the EA has worked with the charity to train over 100 waste and regulation EA officers to recognise exploitative work practices.

Today (Thursday 18 October) is Anti-Slavery Day across England and Wales, a day introduced in 2010 to raise awareness of the need to eradicate modern day slavery in all its forms.

The training for officers precedes the government's organised waste crime review, due out later this year, which recognises an emerging criminal subset within the waste management industry. Earlier this year, the EA introduced the use of body worn cameras for waste enforcement officers following a growing number of abusive incidents during site inspections.

Marie Fallon, Director of Regulated Industry at the Environment Agency said:

Modern slavery is an abhorrent crime that often goes unseen. Whilst the majority of the waste businesses we regulate are well run, there are a concerning number of operators who delve into criminal practices which harm the environment, local communities and their own work force.

Our work with Help for Justice has given our officers the skills to understand the signs of modern slavery which can add value to the work of the police, partners and local authorities who collectively are working to stamp it out.

Sara Squires, UK Training Manager at anti-slavery charity Hope for Justice, said:

It is fantastic to see such strong backing for these efforts from the Environment Agency. I know from first-hand experience that

good-quality training leads to an improved response. More than half of referrals to Hope for Justice of potential victims of modern slavery come from organisations we have trained, and many of those referrals lead directly to rescues.

I have sat with rescued victims as they realise they are now safe and free, and as they begin to understand that they can finally start making their own decisions in an atmosphere of care and support, which is so important.

Better understanding among frontline agencies of the indicators of exploitation and the best ways to respond will change the landscape of anti-slavery efforts in the UK, by increasing prosecutions, deterring traffickers and supporting survivors.

EA officers have been instructed to look for common signs of exploitation including an extreme fear of authorities, signs of physical or psychological trauma including anxiety or malnourishment, and evidence suggesting workers may be living on site.

Anyone with suspicions of contemporary slavery can report it to Hope for Justice on 0300 008 8000 or email [info.uk@hopeforjustice.org](mailto:info.uk@hopeforjustice.org)

To report waste crime, please contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

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Note to editors

EA announces new powers to tackle waste crime:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-powers-to-crack-down-on-waste-crime>

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## **[News story: Review of Highway Code set to empower cyclists and pedestrians](#)**

- review is part of government drive to keep cyclists safe on the roads
- updated national standard for cycling training published to improve safety awareness of all road users
- cycling and walking minister Jesse Norman announces new measures for a healthier population

A new and improved Highway Code will help keep cyclists and pedestrians safe on the roads, Transport Minister Jesse Norman announced today (18 October 2018).

The government is set to review guidance on how road users should behave in relation to cyclists and pedestrians, as part of its ambition to drive down unnecessary deaths.

The new Highway Code will highlight how to avoid the dangers of close passing, and encourage people to adopt the 'Dutch reach', a method of opening a car door with the hand furthest from the handle, to force drivers to look over their shoulder for passing traffic.

Cycling and Walking Minister, Jesse Norman said:

Britain has some of the safest roads in the world, but we need them to be safer still for all – and particularly for cyclists, pedestrians and other vulnerable road users.

Cycling and walking are increasingly being understood as crucial parts of an integrated approach to issues of health, obesity, air quality and town and city planning.

But this will only happen if people feel safe on the roads.

These measures are part of a steady process of improvement and reform designed to achieve just that.

The review follows the recent publication of road casualty figures showing that 101 cyclists died in 2017 in road traffic collisions.

The government launched a new UK-wide initiative in June, to help the police crackdown on close passing, which leads to accidents and puts people off cycling.

West Midlands Police are offering drivers a road-side educational input on safe overtaking but repeat offenders – or anyone deemed to have driven dangerously close to a cyclist – can expect to be prosecuted and taken to court.

Joe Irvin, Chief Executive of Living Streets, said:

This is a major victory. When we walk our streets, we should not have to feel endangered by traffic. People walking and cycling do not cause road danger, congestion or toxic air levels, and yet they're the ones who too often pay the price on our roads. Last year, there was a 5% rise in pedestrian fatalities – this cannot continue.

A revision to update the Highway Code is needed to make people walking and cycling feel safer, and to encourage more people to choose these cleaner and healthier ways to travel.

Duncan Dollimore, Head of Campaigns at Cycling UK said:

Close overtakes and people opening car doors in front of cyclists are not only dangerous, they also put people off riding a bike. That's why Cycling UK has been campaigning for changes to the Highway Code rules for many years, to make the requirements to give enough space when overtaking a cyclist, wait if you can't, and look before you open your car door crystal clear.

We're delighted the government has listened and we hope to contribute to the discussions regarding the amendments required to prioritise the safety of cyclists and other vulnerable road users.

The Department for Transport is also publishing an updated [national standard for cycling training manual](#), now with the latest best practice on safe cycling.

In addition, [a summary of responses from the 'Cycling and walking investment strategy safety review consultation'](#), launched to drive up standards of road safety, will be published. This is an important step in our drive to improve cycling and pedestrian safety.

Today Highways England is announcing a £3 million contract with Sustrans to help deliver a national programme of improvements to the National Cycle Network.

In August the department launched a consultation to look into whether a [new offence equivalent to causing death by careless or dangerous driving should be introduced for dangerous cyclists](#). This consultation will close on 5 November 2018.

Following the [last mile call for evidence](#), the government launched a £2 million fund, which will contribute 20% of the purchase price of new e-cargo bikes, up to the first £5,000 of any purchase price – this will help to cut congestion and improve air quality, encouraging companies to replace older, polluting vans with a zero emission alternative to create a cleaner, greener future.

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## [\*\*Press release: Recreational angling puts £1.4bn into English economy\*\*](#)

Freshwater anglers contribute an estimated £1.4 billion annually to the English economy, supporting up to 27,000 full-time equivalent jobs, through their spending on the sport.

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The Environment Agency commits to tackling modern day slavery

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## [Press release: Dissolving seaweed sauce sachets among innovative schemes to cut down on harmful plastic waste](#)

Dissolving seaweed sauce sachets and technology inspired by a suckerfish to remove plastics from rivers are among 11 innovative projects to win the backing of a £4 million government fund to clean up the environment.

To showcase the ground-breaking research being led by UK scientists and innovators during Green GB Week, the Business Secretary Greg Clark today announced the winners of a competition to develop new products or processes to end the scourge of plastic waste.

Moving to a greener, cleaner economy which helps protect the environment is a key part of the government's modern Industrial Strategy.

Among the winners are Skipping Rocks Lab in London, whose state-of-the-art facility is working on a scheme which could make the sight of single-use condiment sachets on takeaway counters a thing of the past by replacing plastic packaging with seaweed. The material, which has successfully been used as an alternative to the plastic water bottle, biodegrades as fast as a piece of fruit and is cheaper than plastic.

Other successful companies to win government funding include:

- Ichthion: Filters out plastic clogging up the UK's waterways with a boat-mounted vacuum which mimics the way remora fish feed.
- Axion: Recycles plastics like car bumpers and motorcycle helmets, currently sent to landfill, and turns them into plastic pellets for moulding into new products such as bins or cables.
- Polymateria: Makes biodegradable plastic which lets you put packaging straight into the compost with your food waste.

Business and Energy Secretary, Greg Clark, said:

Companies are capitalising on the UK's world leading research base to develop products that tackle the global scourge of plastic waste while grasping the business opportunities found in the green economy.

When you combine Britain's leadership, innovation and determination it is an unbeatable combination – exactly what our Industrial Strategy and Green GB Week are supporting and encouraging.

Professor Duncan Wingham, Executive Chair, Natural Environment Research Council and PRIF lead for UKRI, said:

The Plastics Research Innovation Fund starts bringing the strength of UK Research and Innovation's entire portfolio, from environment to technology to business to behaviour and regulation, to bear on the pressing and very widely recognised problem of plastic waste.

The innovative businesses awarded funding today have stepped up and are bringing their creativity and entrepreneurialism to bear in finding real-world solutions to problem plastics, while at the same time aiming to create cleaner economic growth.

The Industrial Strategy has research and innovation at its heart and as part of this, the Government has committed to boost spending on research and development to 2.4% of GDP by 2027 to ensure the UK takes advantage of the economic opportunities from the move towards a cleaner, greener economy.

The competition is supported by the £20 million Plastics Research and Innovation Fund which aims to build on the UK's global leadership in the fight against waste plastic, ensuring the UK reaps the economic benefits from the transition to a low carbon economy while leaving the environment in a better place for future generations. This announcement builds on the Government's world-leading Clean Growth Strategy which sets out more than £2.5 billion in low carbon innovation.

The announcement of the winners comes during the UK's first ever Green GB Week, calling on governments, businesses and communities to renew their efforts to confront climate change head on while seizing one of the greatest industrial opportunities of our time.

Just last week the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published a report stating that more rapid action is needed to reduce greenhouse gas emission to avoid devastating risks of climate change to health and global prosperity. Government support to tackle plastic waste will help the UK realise the economic benefits of this global move to tackle climate change.

The UK has already taken great strides to tackle plastic pollution with thirteen billion plastic bags taken out of circulation through our 5p carrier bag charge and a ban on microbeads in care products.