

News story: New government action announced to tackle online child sexual abuse

Home Secretary Sajid Javid will travel to Silicon Valley this week to assess the progress tech giants are making in eradicating online child sexual exploitation (CSE).

During a series of meetings with some of the world's biggest technology companies, the Home Secretary will be updated on what has been done to tackle this abhorrent crime and urge companies to do all they can to respond to the evolving threat.

As part of the visit the Home Secretary will also be travelling to Microsoft's HQ in Redmond to convene a 'hackathon', which will see industry experts work together to come up with tools to detect online child grooming.

The Home Secretary has made it his mission to tackle online CSE, which includes looking at all aspects of this crime. In September, he set out a commitment to drive an improved response to the horrifying scale of child sexual abuse online in a speech to the NSPCC.

Today the Home Secretary announced that he has commissioned the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) to look at how advertising is funding CSE activity.

Advertisements for legitimate products, including from well-known brands, are appearing on sites hosting child abuse. The work by the Internet Watch Foundation will help outline the scale of the problem and how government and industry should respond.

The Home Secretary will also chair a new taskforce to bring together representatives from advertising agencies, trade bodies and brands to discuss next steps to ensure criminals don't have access to this funding stream.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Keeping our children safe is my mission as Home Secretary and it is vital tech companies take their responsibility seriously.

I have demanded action and will be discussing the progress industry has made during my visit to the US – as well as seeing the latest tools being developed to detect online child grooming.

This government is leading the response against these sickening crimes. Today, I've commissioned new research to look at how advertising is fuelling the sexual exploitation of children online and I am providing further funding for schemes to tackle the live-streaming of abuse.

Commenting on the commission, Susie Hargreaves OBE, CEO of the Internet Watch Foundation said:

We are delighted that the Home Office has asked us to provide data to explore how legitimate advertisers are being exploited by offenders, intent on sharing horrific imagery of child sexual abuse online. Using a variety of sophisticated techniques to avoid detection, offenders are exploiting online advertising networks to monetise their distribution of child sexual abuse material.

At the heart of all our work, are the child victims of this hideous crime. They range from babies to teens. The abuse itself is horrific, but by sharing the images and videos of these crimes against innocent children, offenders are forcing the victims to suffer the torment of knowing their abuse continues.

It is our mission to identify the methods offenders are employing to share this disturbing material, enabling us to most effectively disrupt its distribution. We hope this research will help us in this battle.

On Wednesday the Home Secretary will give a speech at Microsoft's headquarters before the tech hack takes place on the same day. This will see engineers come together to try and come up with solutions for tackling online grooming. Any products will then be given out as a free tool for others to use.

The National Crime Agency estimates that around 80,000 people in the UK present some kind of sexual threat to children online while there has been a 700% increase since 2013 in the number of referrals to the National Crime Agency for child sexual abuse images.

In a further attempt to improve the response, work is being done to develop new tools to improve the capabilities of the Child Abuse Image Database (CAID) – the database used by the NCA and UK police forces to search for indecent images of children and increase the ability to identify victims.

Following a call to industry 3 new tools using CAID are being developed:

- a fast-forensic algorithm to rapidly analyse seized devices and categorise against CAID
- a capability to automatically identify and categorise illegal imagery based on UK legislation of classification of A, B, C against the CAID trusted images
- a capability to detect images with matching scenes to help identify locations in common of indecent images of children

Trials to test this newly developed capability with some police forces will begin later this year. Further to this, a £250,000 innovation call has now opened for organisations to bid for funding to assist them in developing innovative solutions to disrupt live streaming of abuse.

Through the competition, led by the Joint Security and Resilience Centre in partnership with Innovate UK, groups are being urged to come up with technical solutions that could be applied by platforms of all sizes, including those with less resource to commit to research.

Press release: Beavers to return to Essex for the first time in 400 years

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A pair of beavers will be heading to a new home in North Essex as part of a pioneering natural flood management scheme for East Anglia.

It is hoped the Eurasian Beavers will improve biodiversity and help to reduce local flood risk as part of a new approach to flood prevention at the historic Spains Hall Estate, just upstream of the picturesque village of Finchingfield.

The Environment Agency is working in partnership with Spains Hall Estate, the Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust, Essex Wildlife Trust and others, with funding from partners including the Anglian Eastern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC).

The whole story will be captured in a documentary series, due to be screened next year, overseen by renowned wildlife filmmaker Russell Savory for independent film company Copper Productions. The beavers will have a territory covering 4 hectares, with plenty of trees to get their teeth stuck into and a boundary fence helping to keep them safe. Beavers have not been found in Essex for 400 years since they were hunted to extinction, although they have been reintroduced in small numbers in other parts of the country in recent years.

A second element of the project will involve man-made natural flood management measures being introduced on a separate strand of Finchingfield Brook at Spains Hall Estate. As well as helping to slow the flow after heavy rain, the scheme should also create wetland that will slowly release water in

drier periods.

Spains Hall Estate owner Archie Ruggles-Brise said he was excited to welcome the beavers to the estate, home to his family for 250 years.

He said:

We have experienced first-hand the disruption caused by flooding in Finchingfield so we are excited to be able to contribute to this novel approach to reducing flood risk, an undeniable public good.

The added attraction of being able to pit nature against man to see who 'does it better' will be a rare chance to learn and adapt our approach.

We hope the project will also focus a spotlight on our little corner of rural North West Essex, a hidden gem normally only enjoyed by those in the know. We are keen to welcome more people to the area so they can see for themselves what they might be able to do back home.

The Environment Agency's Matt Butcher said it was a "pioneering" project for East Anglia. He said:

Natural Flood Management can be a great way to reduce flood risk for communities where traditional flood defences are not appropriate. Introducing leaky dams along Finchingfield Brook should slow the flow and reduce flood peaks downstream whilst improving habitat in this fantastic landscape.

The beavers bring another exciting dimension, as we can assess how effective they are at creating amazing new wetlands and as flood engineers.

Essex County Councillor and RFCC member Simon Walsh said:

Natural Flood Management provides many opportunities to explore innovative solutions for local flood risk concerns. Working with nature, we can often achieve successful outcomes to better protect people and property from flooding, whilst at the same time improving the environment for wildlife.

Beavers are renowned for felling trees and building dams and to use them for natural flood management is really exciting, as not only are more properties protected from flood risk, but animals once lost to the British countryside are being re-introduced in lowland Britain.

Darren Tansley, river catchment co-ordinator for Essex Wildlife Trust, said:

Working with Government, other conservationists and a forward thinking landowner to reduce flood risk in Finchingfield is an ideal opportunity for Essex Wildlife Trust. But the partners that eclipse us all are surely the beavers; natural engineers of our freshwater environment that we hope will trigger an explosion of biodiversity in their wake.

Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust chairman Andrew Davies said:

This project brings river improvement through Natural Flood Management, better the river environment for many other species and by raising the profile of beavers, educates us all. It achieves many of our objectives as a Rivers Trust. It is a very exciting project for us to be involved with.

Notes to editors

Hunted to extinction

The Eurasian Beaver is a large semi-aquatic native mammal that was once widespread throughout Britain. They were hunted to extinction by the beginning of the 16th Century for their meat, fur and scent glands. The species was reintroduced into parts of Scotland since 2001 and earlier this year a pair were released into the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire, an event attended by Environment Secretary Michael Gove through a partnership with the Forestry Commission and Natural England.

Keystone species

Beavers are a 'keystone species' – playing an important role in wetland ecology by creating ecosystems that provide habitats for many other plant, insect and mammal species. Few other animals, aside from humans, have the ability to so drastically modify and shape their surrounding environment.

For this reason beavers are often referred to as "ecosystem engineers". Beavers are well known for their ability to fell trees to dam shallow watercourses and create pools to make them feel safe.

The associated wetlands, interconnecting beaver canals, coppiced woodland, glades and deadwood provides rich and diverse habitat for an abundance of wildlife including plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.

For more details visit the project web page
www.spainshallestate.co.uk/nfm_beavers

Contact

For Environment Agency East Anglia press office please contact (24 hours):
0800 917 9250

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**[Press release: AI company secures
£29.5 million investment for UK](#)**

expansion

The investment is set to offer a boost to the company who created 50 jobs in London following assistance from the Department for International Trade's [Global Entrepreneur Programme](#).

Engineer.ai's 'Builder' is an AI-powered Software Assembly line which breaks projects into small re-usable features that can be customised with human interaction from around the world. In turn, this allows for the customisation of high-quality software packages in a low-cost, and time-effective manner.

[DIT's Global Entrepreneur Programme](#) helps overseas companies set up in the UK with the offer of expert guidance and introductions to key investors within industry. Since its beginnings, the programme has generated over 5,000 jobs in the UK and raised over \$1 billion of private investment for companies.

Engineer.ai's founder, Sachin Dev Duggal will announce the investment from the Web Summit in Lisbon, where he will meet Margot James, the Minister for Digital and Creative Industries.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox MP said:

The UK is known across the globe for cutting edge innovation and our world-class tech companies. It is because of companies like Engineer.AI that last year the UK secured more tech venture capital investment than Germany, France, Spain and Ireland combined.

My international economic department is working hard to help firms go from startup to scale-up through initiatives like the Global Entrepreneur Programme which gives guidance to budding entrepreneurs around the world. The Programme has seen 900 entrepreneurs invest in the UK since 2005 – creating more than 5,000 high quality jobs and raising more than £1bn in venture capital.

Sachin Dev Duggal, Founder of Engineer.ai said:

We created Engineer.ai so that everyone can build an idea without learning to code. This investment round validates our approach of making bespoke software effortless. The capital comes at a time of rapid growth and will propel the platform into the mainstream, allowing Builder to open the door for entire categories of companies that could not consider it before.

Engineer.ai launched in June 2018 and before the end of 2020, is projected to pass the \$100m revenue mark.

Minister for Digital Margot James MP said:

The UK is a haven for investment and Europe's leading tech hub. It's fantastic to see another one of our innovative digital firms raise the funding it needs to take a step to the next level.

We are working tirelessly to make the UK the best place in the world to start and grow a digital business.