

Press release: Environment Agency calls for action on water efficiency

The first major report on water resources in England states that climate change and demand from a growing population are the biggest pressures on the availability of water. Without action to increase supply, reduce demand and cut down on wastage, many areas in England could see significant supply deficits by 2050 – particularly in the south east.

The State of the Environment: Water Resources report highlights unsustainable levels of water abstraction, leakage from water companies – currently estimated at 3 billion litres per day – and demand from industry and the public as three of the issues to tackle in order to protect the water environment.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency said:

We need to change our attitudes to water use. It is the most fundamental thing needed to ensure a healthy environment but we are taking too much of it and have to work together to manage this precious resource.

Industry must innovate and change behaviours in order to reduce demand and cut down on wastage – and we all have a duty to use water more wisely at home.

With demand on the rise, water companies must invest more in infrastructure to address leakage instead of relying on abstraction and the natural environment to make up this shortfall.

The report shows that current levels of water abstraction are unsustainable in more than a quarter of groundwaters and one fifth of rivers, leading to reduced flows which could damage local ecology and wildlife.

Previously, unsustainable abstraction has prevented up to 15% of rivers meeting good ecological status – including globally important chalk streams. Summer river flows and groundwater levels may decrease further in the future.

Last year the government announced a plan for abstraction reform which will review existing licences and introduce more controls to protect water resources. The Environment Agency has started work in four priority catchments to test out new licensing approaches to help meet local demand.

Of the water taken from freshwater sources over half (55%) is abstracted by water companies for public water supply and more than a third (36%) is used for electricity supply and other industries. The Environment Agency has urged water companies to pursue ambitious water resource management plans and called on industry to play its part to find ways to use water more

efficiently.

The government's 25 year environment plan sets out an ambition to reduce individual water use – on average 140 litres per person each day – by working with industry to set a personal consumption target. The Environment Agency will work with the government to set this target and cost-effective measures to meet it.

The Environment Agency plays a key role in protecting water for people's lives and livelihoods – by responding to pollution incidents, prosecuting offenders, regulating abstraction and improving water quality along rivers and beaches.

Press release: Introduction of ivory bill boosts fight against elephant poaching

Updated: Added a supportive quote from a stakeholder

One of the toughest bans on ivory sales in the world is a step closer to coming into force in the UK as the Government today (23 May 2018) introduced the Ivory Bill.

The introduction of this Bill means that robust measures [set out last month](#) by Environment Secretary Michael Gove are a step closer to becoming law, and helping to protect elephants for future generations.

The Bill covers ivory items of all ages, not only those produced after a certain date, subject to some narrow, carefully-defined exemptions. The maximum penalty for breaching the ban will be an unlimited fine or up to five years in jail.

The Bill follows widespread engagement with environmental groups and the antiques trade sector as well as the general public. More than 70,000 people and organisations responded to Defra's consultation on an ivory ban late last year, with over 88% of responses in favour of measures to ban ivory sales in the UK.

The number of elephants has declined by almost a third in the last decade and around 20,000 a year are still being slaughtered because of the global demand for ivory. The UK Government continues to show global leadership in this area and in October will play host to leaders from across the globe at the fourth international conference on the illegal wildlife trade.

Environment Secretary, Michael Gove said:

Elephants are one of the world's most iconic animals and we must do all we can to protect them for future generations. That's why we will introduce one of the world's toughest bans on ivory sales. The overwhelmingly positive response to our consultation shows the strength of public feeling to protect these magnificent animals.

We have acted quickly in introducing this Bill, less than six weeks after publishing our consultation responses. I hope this serves as a clear sign of our global leadership on this vital issue.

As announced in April's consultation response, the Bill provides for narrowly-defined and carefully-targeted exemptions for items which do not contribute directly or indirectly to the poaching of elephants:

- Items with only a small amount of ivory. Such items must be comprised of less than 10% ivory by volume and have been made prior to 1947
- Musical instruments. These must have an ivory content of less than 20% and have been made prior to 1975
- The rarest and most important items of their type. Items of outstanding artistic, cultural or historic significance, and made prior to 1918 Such items will be assessed by specialists at institutions such as the UK's most prestigious museums
- Sales to and between accredited museums. This applies museums accredited by [Arts Council England](#), [the Welsh Government](#), [Museums and Galleries Scotland](#) or [the Northern Ireland Museums Council](#) in the UK, or [the International Council of Museums](#) outside the UK
- Portrait miniatures. A specific exemption for portrait miniatures – which were often painted on thin slivers of ivory – made before 1918

The combination of the UK's ban on ivory items of all ages with these exemptions delivers one of the toughest ivory bans in the world. The US federal ban has a rolling exemption for items over 100 years, as well as items with up to 50% ivory content. China's ban exempts ivory "relics", but this term is not clearly defined.

Charlie Mayhew MBE, Founder and CEO of [Tusk Trust](#) said:

We very much welcome the speed with which the Government has moved to introduce this important bill. The public response to the consultation demonstrated that there is overwhelming support for this tough new legislation to ban the trade in ivory in the UK.

This bill will ensure that as the Government prepares to host the next international conference on the illegal wildlife trade in October, the UK will once again be taking a global lead on closing ivory markets that have resulted in the decimation of hundreds of thousands of elephants over recent years. We trust that Parliament will move equally swiftly to pass the bill into law.

Tanya Steele, Chief Executive at [WWF](#) said:

Every day we lose around 55 African elephants, slaughtered for their ivory. If we want to ensure this majestic animal still roams a generation from now, we must shut down domestic ivory markets around the world.

The London Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference this October can be a catalyst for that, but progress towards a UK ban is essential if we are to persuade other countries to take action. It's great to see this Bill being introduced to the Commons, and we hope it now passes speedily through Parliament to become law.

John Stephenson, [Stop Ivory](#) CEO said:

We welcome this speedy introduction of the legislation to end ivory sales in the UK. The pace at which important proposals are being underscored by legislation is a welcome and important contribution to ending the scourge of poaching and securing a sustainable future for elephants.

Hopefully the remainder of the EU will now follow the UK's lead without further delay and implement the changes that their populations have been demanding.

As profits become ever greater, the illegal wildlife trade has become a transnational organised enterprise, estimated to be worth up to £17 billion a year.

In October, the UK will show global leadership in this fight when it hosts the fourth [international conference](#) on the illegal wildlife trade. The event

will bring global leaders to London to tackle the strategic challenges of the trade. This follows the ground breaking London 2014 conference on the illegal wildlife trade, and subsequent conferences in Botswana and Vietnam.

[Press release: Darwin Initiative: £10 million for international conservation projects](#)

Updated: Added additional links to the list of projects and corrected a minor typo

On [International Day for Biological Diversity](#) (22 May) the UK Government has announced the latest round of successful funding bids from the [Darwin Initiative](#) to deliver on flagship commitments set out in the [25 Year Environment Plan](#).

Environment Secretary, Michael Gove, awarded a total package of £10.6 million to 52 projects over the next three years from across the globe that will support and enhance biodiversity.

Since 1992, the Darwin Initiative has funded 1,055 projects from 159 countries, with a value of £140m.

Environment Secretary, Michael Gove said:

International Day for Biological Diversity offers an important moment for us all to consider how we can help the natural environment thrive on our planet.

Through the Darwin Initiative, we are driving change to protect and enhance international biodiversity. Our 25 Year Environment Plan has set the priorities for funding and demonstrates the UK's global leadership.

Darwin Initiative

The Darwin Initiative is a grants scheme that helps to protect biodiversity and the natural environment around the globe. Many of the applications reflect the UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan commitments to protect the marine environment, to secure the benefits of biodiversity for the poorest communities, and to help prevent the extinction of species.

The fund is administered by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and uses the UK Government's Official Development Assistance.

Projects receiving funding include:

'Biodiversity and Agriculture: addressing scale insect threats in Kenya' and led by the Natural History Museum.

Sir Michael Dixon, Director of the [Natural History Museum](#), said:

The role of the Natural History Museum is to inform debate, empower better decisions and lead progress in natural science – sustaining and improving life on Earth. The funding we have received through the Darwin Initiative is allowing us to do just that.

We have participated in 44 Darwin-funded projects to date, from fellowships and awards to major projects. The latest funding is allowing us to collaborate with expert partners in Kenya to help communities better identify, target and respond to invasions of scale insects. These pests damage native trees and crops in Kenya and can cause up to 91 per cent of crop losses but often pesticides are misapplied, damaging both crop yields and the environment. This project will empower communities to improve agricultural practices and protect the nature around them.

[Snow Leopard Conservancy](#) has been given support for sustaining snow leopard conservation through strengthened local institutions and enterprises.

Director of the Snow Leopard Conservancy, Dr Rodney Jackson said:

Nepal is adopting the new Federal Constitution aimed at devolving more powers to the local municipality level, thereby giving local communities a greater role in biodiversity conservation.

The Darwin Initiative support comes at the perfect time, enabling the Snow Leopard Conservancy and partners to greatly expand important grassroots, community-driven actions benefiting the snow leopards, known by some as the Ghost of the Mountains, in two of Nepal's most important mountain protected areas.

Another project is 'Andean bears and people: coexistence through poverty reduction' and is being led by Chester Zoo.

Alex Zimmerman, Head of Conservation Science at [Chester Zoo](#), said:

Through the support from the Darwin Initiative we will be able to facilitate human-bear coexistence in the southern Bolivian Andes. Our project links poverty reduction and benefits from biodiversity conservation by improving livelihoods and wellbeing of communities who live alongside this threatened species.

A [full list of projects](#), including a number of [small schemes](#), to be supported by the Darwin Initiative is available on gov.uk

Latest support

The Darwin Initiative and the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund have both re-opened for the next round of applications for funding. Projects are being encouraged that support the commitments in the UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan.

For the first time the IWT Challenge Fund will provide funding for projects schemes aimed at the illegal trade in certain species of flora around the globe.

- [Guidance for applicants to the Darwin Initiative](#)
- [Guidance for applicants to the IWT Challenge Fund](#)

Professor Kathy Willis, Director of Science, [Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew](#) said:

We welcome this announcement on International Day of Biological Diversity of new resources to help address and reduce the illegal trade in important plant species. This trade has been having a devastating impact on plant diversity in many parts of the world.

Kew's State of the World's Plants report last year published that 31,517 plant species are currently listed on the CITES appendices and of these 334 are considered critically threatened by international trade. This funding is therefore coming at a vital moment for plant scientists to be able to act and do more to protect orchids, cacti and cycads in particular against this growing threat.

In October 2018, the UK will host a fourth international conference on the illegal wildlife trade, bringing global leaders to London to tackle the strategic challenges of the trade. This follows the ground breaking London 2014 conference on the illegal wildlife trade, and subsequent conferences in Botswana and Vietnam.

Detailed guide: Darwin Initiative: partnership projects

Updated: Updated the guidance under the 'How to apply' heading to make it clear applications need to be submitted through the Flexigrant application portal.

Partnership Projects are small grants intended to help organisations who are new to the Darwin Initiative to develop their application. The awards do this by:

- connecting organisations new to Darwin with partners who have experience of managing successful Darwin Projects; and/or
- supporting work to build new partnerships between applicant organisations

A successful Partnership Project should lead to a Main Darwin Initiative project application.

Partnership Projects support activities which might previously have been supported under a Darwin scoping award.

You can read more about a successful partnership project – which was awarded as a “Scoping Study” under a previous round of the Darwin Initiative, in this [case study – Yaya Biosphere Reserve, Ethiopia](#).

How to apply

You will need to apply online for Round 25 Darwin Initiative Partnership projects through the [Flexigrant application portal](#). Word versions of the application forms are available here for drafting purposes only.

You should first read:

- [Guidance notes for applicants \(round 25\)](#)
- [Darwin Initiative Round 25: Flexi-grant user guide](#)

Once you have read the guidance, complete the Partnership projects application form on the [Flexigrant application portal](#). For drafting purposes, you may find the [Partnership projects application form](#) (MS Word Document, 152KB)

useful.

When to apply

The timetable for Round 25 Darwin Partnership Awards is set out below:

- application process opens: 22 May 2018
- deadline for applications: Tuesday 13 November 2018
- expected notification of successful projects: February 2019
- expected start date for successful projects: From April 2019

Who can apply?

Applications for partnership projects must be to establish new partnerships and must not simply be to continue existing working relationships. We would normally expect applications from partnerships involving around 2-4 organisations.

Partnership Project lead applicants must also meet all of the following criteria:

- have recognised expertise in the sustainable use or conservation of biodiversity and/or development;
- have a proven track record of managing biodiversity-related and/or natural resource orientated development projects in partnership with local organisations
- can provide evidence of work which has had an impact on the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity and/or sustainable economic development
- can demonstrate that alternative funding – including financial support from their own organisation – is not available to develop the Darwin project proposal in consultation with their partners. Partnership project funding should not be seen as an alternative to seeking matched funding from other sources.

Partnership Project partners:

- must include at least one organisation that has not previously received Darwin funding

Funding available

There is a maximum level for a partnership project, and further information on the size of Darwin partnership project funding can be found in the Guidance Notes for Applicants Round 25.

[Form: Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund: 2018 application round](#)

How to apply

You will need to apply online for Round 5 of the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund through the [Flexigrant application portal](#). Word versions of the application forms are available here for drafting purposes only.

Before applying, please read the guidance above and the [Finance for Darwin and IWT](#).

Once you have read the guidance, please complete the Stage 1 online application form.

If you are invited to Stage 2, please complete the Stage 2 online application form (by invitation only). The budget form must also be submitted with your Stage 2 application form online.

When to apply

There is a two-stage application process for IWT Challenge Fund projects. The timetable for Round 5 is set out below:

- Stage 1 application process opens: 22 May 2018
- deadline for Stage 1 applications: Thursday 10 July 2018
- expected outcome of Stage 1 and notification of applicants invited to Stage 2: By October 2018
- deadline for Stage 2 applications: Thursday 22 November 2018
- expected notification of successful projects: February 2019
- expected start date for successful projects: From 1 April 2019

Who can apply

Please refer to the guidance above for the list of countries and organizations eligible for the scheme.

Read about the [Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund](#).