

Press release: Government launches new plans to stamp out the illegal wildlife trade ahead of landmark UK conference

Updated: This article has been amended since it was first published. Whilst the UK and many other donors increased their contribution to the Global Environment Facility in this round, not all donor countries were in a position to do so. As such the final level of funding allocation is lower than was projected across the board, including for tackling the illegal wildlife trade.

With this week marking 100 days to go until the 2018 London Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference, the Government has today (Monday 2 July) announced ambitious new plans and funding for tackling the illegal wildlife trade across the world. The Secretaries of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Defra, and DFID announced a £31.5 million boost for anti-wildlife trafficking projects around the world.

The Foreign Secretary set out the Government's ambition to reduce the illegal killing of African elephants for ivory by at least one third by 2020, and to further halve this rate by 2024. Achieving this will be another significant step to safeguard endangered species from extinction, in a decade of action since the 2014 London Declaration committed to fight the illegal wildlife trade.

To help make this ambition a reality, the Government will launch the Ivory Alliance 2024, bringing together a network of global leaders, conservationists and experts to engage with countries where ivory demand and trafficking is high. It will work with partners globally to increase the number of countries committed to domestic ivory bans to more than 30 by 2020 and for tougher enforcement against those caught breaking the law. The UK has already set itself as a global leader on this issue, with a domestic ivory ban announced in April 2018.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

More than 20,000 African elephants are killed every year, fuelling the despicable illegal ivory market and poachers' dirty profits. We need immediate and effective global action to decapitate this terrible trade. The new Ivory Alliance 2024 will play a key role in closing those markets which are driving elephants to extinction.

The UK will be at the vanguard of global efforts to defeat the illegal wildlife trade in 2018 and we will bring world leaders

together for talks in October to find a solution. We cannot simply sit back and watch as more endangered species are wiped out by criminal kingpins and corrupt middlemen who are robbing local communities in Africa and Asia of sustainable livelihoods.

Defra have announced £4.5 million for 14 new Challenge Fund projects to combat the illegal wildlife trade by addressing demand reduction, strengthening enforcement and criminal justice, and providing alternative livelihoods.

Projects that will receive funding include supporting eco-guardians and community enforcement networks to protect elephants, a 'payback' scheme for the perpetrators of IWT and the development of strong room best practice guidelines for the storage of seized illegal ivory. There will also be funding provided to disrupt the poaching affecting iconic species such as Sumatran tigers and snow leopards.

Environment Secretary, Michael Gove said:

Environmental challenges do not respect borders, and require coordinated international action.

Our Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund is driving change to combat this despicable criminality. The 14 projects range across 27 countries and showcase measures from criminal justice to education. These priorities reflect our commitment in the 25 Year Environment Plan to work with other nations to stamp out this vile trade.

The fund, alongside our introduction of one of the world's toughest bans on ivory sales, shows our global leadership in protecting wildlife in its natural environment.

DFID and Defra have also helped secure an increase of up to £27m in international efforts to protect global nature including helping to end the wildlife trade over the next four years. This is through an almost 30% increase to the Global Environment Facility's Global Wildlife Programme – the largest single program dedicated to combat poaching, trafficking, and demand for wildlife and wildlife products.

It will see more funding than ever before being spent on projects fighting the illegal wildlife trade across Africa and Asia, including tackling corruption, strengthening border law enforcement and promoting the development of nature-based tourism. It is through these long term solutions that this trade can be ended permanently.

The International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

The illegal wildlife trade not only puts the world's most endangered species at risk, but fuels the corruption and crime

which hold back development for some of the poorest nations.

The UK is leading the way in raising ambitions around the world to make sure we put an end to this crime for good. We have now secured more international support to protect wildlife than ever before, which will also improve the lives of the vulnerable communities who live alongside it.

Later today, the three Secretaries of State will host an event at the Foreign Office, bringing together NGOs, businesses, country representatives and others who are playing a key role in fighting the illegal wildlife trade. The event will recognise the work already being done to tackle the illegal wildlife trade and encourage increased ambition by all sectors in advance of the October conference.

Dominic Jermey, Director General of ZSL, said:

As an international conservation charity, ZSL warmly welcomes the UK Government's commitment to tackling the illegal wildlife trade. Wildlife across the globe is being slaughtered for its skin, scales, tusks and feathers. Whether it's elephants or rhinos, African grey parrots or pangolins – IWT has put many species directly at risk. Fresh thinking is urgently needed by Governments, working in partnership with NGOs, business and wider civil society, to tackle IWT. I'm delighted to see the UK committing to this leading role.

Notes

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- The UK has committed £250m to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) over the next four years, (2018-2022) with DFID contributing £150m and DEFRA £100m. This will help protect around 600 million hectares of land and marine habitats – an area equivalent to 24 times the size of the UK.
- The UK, with other donors, successfully lobbied to increase the size of Global Wildlife Programme (GWP), which is part of the GEF, from \$131m to \$168m over the next four years. With this almost 30% increase, more funding will be allocated to efforts to support wildlife than ever before.
- The Global Wildlife Programme is the largest single programme dedicated to combat poaching, trafficking, and demand for wildlife and wildlife products. Since 2016, the GWP has funded projects in 19 countries across Africa and Asia, it will:

1. Promote investments in cross-border conservation areas
2. Strengthen governance and reduce corruption
3. Support cross-border law enforcement
4. Work to reduce demand for wildlife products
5. Promote the development of nature-based tourism development in Sub-Saharan Africa
6. Coordinate international donors, including working with the private sector

Challenge Fund case studies:

Case study 1

- ZSL Mongolia's 2018 IWT Challenge Fund project will strengthen border law enforcement by bringing specialist training for border staff and detector dog units at key points; create a multi-agency taskforce on wildlife trade for better intelligence-sharing, and by helping communities living along the borders to keep out criminal groups through the creation of surveillance networks.

ZSL Director of Conservation, Matthew Hatchwell, said:

The illegal trade of wildlife products in Asia presents enormous challenges in preventing the large scale loss of species that can only be tackled by multiple partners working together, in particular to support the conservation efforts of national governments. ZSL is very grateful for the support of the UK government's Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund to strengthen frontline law enforcement in Mongolia, home to highly endangered species such as the Saiga antelope, snow leopard and Bactrian camel.

Case study 2

- Ivory, accrued by natural mortality or seizures of illegal stock, is held in government storerooms that often lack adequate security and management procedures, and are vulnerable to corruption and theft. A robust ivory management system will keep these products from returning to and perpetuating the illegal supply chain. In partnership with national government authorities across Africa, we will develop, trial and put into practice storeroom Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), embedding this into government policy to ensure regular use.

John Stephenson, CEO Stop Ivory said:

We are delighted to have the UK Government's support for a crucial project to fight the illegal wildlife trade. By ensuring that African Governments have comprehensive stockpile storeroom security and procedures in place, this project will prevent illegal wildlife

products from leaking back into the supply chain, which perpetuates the illegal trade and poaching of elephants. Through this funding, the UK Government continues to work with the African countries leading the Elephant Protection Initiative to secure a meaningful future for elephants across Africa – the initiative the Government helped launch at the London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in 2014. The unprecedented crisis we face – with Africa’s natural heritage being destroyed and communities put at risk due to poaching by armed gangs – will only stop when ivory is securely put beyond economic use.

Case study 3

- This innovative project will look at how sanctions against IWT can better reflect the injuries to society (For example on livelihoods, biodiversity, culture). It will compare international sanctions to illegal wildlife trade, and initiate international “best practices” standards. In Indonesia, it will work with experts and government officials to review sanctions, and provide expertise to quantify the costs of this illegal trade on society. The project aims to apply these to a first-of-a-kind civil liability suit to hold perpetrators of the illegal trade in wildlife financially responsible for environmental harm.

Dr Jacob Phelps, Lancaster University, said:

This new funding from the UK Government will help the Lancaster Environment Centre to tackle the real-world challenges of taking legal action against illegal wildlife trade. In collaboration with lawyers and conservationists across a dozen countries, we will explore new legal responses to wildlife trade–focused on Indonesia, but with global implications. When an oil spill devastates a coast line, we pursue the perpetrators not only with fines and jail sentences, but also with orders to restore the environment, issue apologies and compensate victims. In contrast, the perpetrators of large-scale, commercial illegal wildlife trade are rarely held accountable for the broad impacts they impose on the environment and society. In this project, we will explore new strategies to hold large-scale perpetrators legally responsible for the environmental harm they cause, including impacts on livelihoods, biodiversity and culture.

Further information

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