

Press release: UK aid to protect critically endangered wildlife and create thousands of sustainable jobs

- UK aid to protect endangered Sumatran tiger, with only around 30 left in one critical habitat
- Partnership work in Indonesia will help create 16,000 sustainable jobs
- UK aid has a unique role to play in tackling the underlying causes of the illegal wildlife trade, while protecting the livelihoods of local communities.

UK aid will protect critically endangered wildlife in Indonesia and Liberia by creating sustainable jobs for people who work near these animal's habitats, International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt announced today ahead of next month's Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference.

On a visit to the ZSL, London Zoo – which is leading the global Sumatran Tiger breeding programme – Ms Mordaunt committed to tackle the underlying causes of the Illegal Wildlife Trade and to protect species including the critically endangered Sumatran Tiger, Asian Elephant, Orangutan and West African Chimpanzee.

UK aid, through the Partnerships For Forests programme, is helping to create sustainable jobs and livelihoods for local communities in Africa and Southeast Asia. This provides communities with an alternative to clearing forest or hunting wildlife to make a living, and ensures that vital forest habitat for wildlife is protected. This is essential for the long-term survival of key wildlife species like the chimpanzee and the tiger.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

“The Illegal Wildlife Trade and the destruction of forests and natural habitats are having a catastrophic impact on both iconic wildlife and the world's poorest people.

“Nobody wants to see extraordinary species become extinct, or the communities living near their habitats struggle for jobs and livelihoods, which is why UK aid has a unique role to play in tackling the underlying causes driving these problems, namely poverty and rapid, unmanaged deforestation.

“It's only by working together with local communities that we will preserve endangered wildlife like the Sumatran Tiger, and protect them for future generations.”

Chief Executive at WWF Tanya Steele said:

“We don't have to choose between helping people and saving our wildlife.

“Projects like this show UK aid can be used to help the world’s poorest people and save some of our most threatened species, like the Sumatran tiger and Sumatran elephant.

“Next month, world leaders are meeting in London to find ways to stop the illegal wildlife trade. That will only succeed if local communities are part of the solution not the problem.”

Dominic Jerney, Director General of ZSL, London Zoo said:

“As an international conservation charity, ZSL welcomes DFID’s increased focus on protecting critically endangered wildlife, tackling the illegal wildlife trade and supporting marginalised communities.

“ZSL’s own work in Indonesia with flagship species such as the tiger and its habitat enable us to address critical threats such as forest loss, mitigating forest fires and IWT.

“ZSL works closely with local communities; we help to empower them in managing their natural resources; and we ensure they have a voice in decision making to support their economic resilience.”

The Department for International Development (DFID), is part of a ground-breaking public-private partnership to protect chimpanzee habitats in Liberia and tiger habitats in Indonesia, through investments to develop sustainable rubber and cocoa. The project will help to create an estimated 16,000 fair wage jobs and in turn improve the livelihoods of 50,000 people. These jobs bring benefits to entire households and their dependants arising through the investment in the area.

The range of support demonstrates, ahead of the Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference in October, DFID’s unique place in addressing the underlying causes of Illegal Wildlife Trade and the UK’s role as a world leader in supporting global biodiversity.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Indonesia’s Bukit Tigapuluh Landscape is home to some of the world’s most endangered species, the Sumatran Tiger (only 30-40 remain in the landscape), the Orangutan and the Asian Elephant. DFID’s support will:

- Help 28 public and private organisations work together to protect the landscape, including local government, national conservation authorities, private companies, NGOs and indigenous community leaders to secure critical remaining wildlife areas, preventing the loss of remaining habitat and curbing the risk of poaching.
- Help to develop ‘green’ (environmentally sustainable) rubber, other products like wild forest honey, and establish a wildlife corridor within the conservation landscape.

In Liberia’s Gola Forest:

- To counter the mounting threat of deforestation and boost forest and biodiversity conservation, DFID's Partnerships for Forests is supporting the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and local conservation partners in Liberia to develop a market for forest-friendly Gola cocoa.
- RSPB and partners are already supporting smallholders around protected forest in Sierra Leone to market forest-friendly cocoa, the first shipment of which was sold to international markets in 2017. This will protect wildlife habitats for threatened bird species and critically endangered West African chimpanzee and the endangered pygmy hippopotamus.

In addition to these projects, DFID's total support to this programme is helping to prevent the destruction of over one million hectares of forests and wildlife habitats in Africa and Southeast Asia by 2020.

- Low-level poachers are usually young, poor villagers who poach to earn money. A poacher might receive £35 for a live chimpanzee which would sell for £14,000. When wildlife is slaughtered for quick cash and trees are illegally logged, ecosystems break down – and the poorest people are hit hardest.
- DFID's wider work, which in many cases will have knock on benefits in addressing the underlying conditions driving the illegal wildlife trade or destruction of wildlife habitats, could constitute as much as £583mn of support from 2011 to 2022. This is an approximate combination of DFID's support for job creation, tackling deforestation, tackling illicit financial flows and other areas in IWT priority countries. This announcement relates to three projects DFID is funding through Partnerships for Forests. Two projects in Indonesia and one in the Gola Forest. In total these projects represent a £2.1mn allocation. DFID's total support to the Partnerships for Forest programme is £56.5mn.

1. A public-private partnership to develop a green rubber plantation and establish a wildlife corridor. The plantation is being developed by PT Royal Lestari Utama, a joint venture backed by tire manufacturer Michelin, working closely with WWF Indonesia. This will contribute to the protection of the 400,000 hectare landscape. The initiative has secured green commercial finance of US\$95 million.
2. A coalition of 28 public and private organisations work together to protect the landscape, including local government, national conservation authorities, private companies, NGOs and indigenous community leaders. This will help to meet the most immediate conservation needs in the landscape, including community engagement and the development of long-term economic security for habitat and wildlife protection activities – supporting communities to be the first line of defence for the environment they live in. .
3. Creating incentives for the protection of the Gola rainforest through the production of 'rainforest-friendly' cocoa as an alternative to other, unsustainable agriculture and logging practices, working with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and local businesses.

The UK (DFID, FCO, Defra) is hosting an international conference on IWT to inspire global commitment to eliminate the illegal wildlife trade. The conference will bring together global leaders, governments, the private sector, NGOs, academics and others. Bringing the global community back to London this year re-affirms our combined commitment to tackling the trade at the highest levels.

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