

Press release: Cyanide spill in Derbyshire still being assessed

Environment Agency officers are continuing to investigate and monitor the impact on the local environment following an accidental chemical spillage at an industrial unit on Adams Close, Heanor, Derbyshire. The accident caused a spill of around 400 litres of liquid cyanide, some of which leaked into a nearby pond.

The incident happened on Tuesday 6 February and Environment Agency officers were immediately on the scene along with colleagues from Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service, Severn Trent Water and Derbyshire County Council to manage the spill and minimise the risk to the environment.

Environment Agency officers are now in their third day at the scene and are continuing to take water samples and are assessing any potential environmental impacts this spill has had on the local watercourses and ponds.

Penny Thorpe, Area Duty Manager at the Environment Agency said:

Our officers have been on site since the incident occurred on Tuesday and have worked alongside Derbyshire Fire and Rescue and Derbyshire County Council to contain the spillage in order to minimise any effects on the environment and wildlife in the surrounding area.

A temporary dam has been created in order to stop the spillage leaving the pond and to prevent any further contamination and our officers will continue to monitor the environment for any other impacts from this spillage.

We have taken water samples from Adam's pond and the brook further upstream to help us establish the best way to clear the environment of any contaminants that may remain, we will also be investigating the cause of this spill and following up with action as necessary.

Our staff work 24/7 to protect people and wildlife from pollution incidents, if you see pollution in your local river, call our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

[News story: UK flu levels remain high according to PHE statistics](#)

Updated: Added latest flu data.

Latest update

Seasonal flu levels remain high but are continuing to stabilise across the UK.

The latest Public Health England (PHE) report published at 2pm today, Thursday 8 February 2018, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK and rates across most indicators remain stable. The statistics show over the last week there has been a 17% reduction in the GP consultation rate with flu-like illness, a 14% reduction in the flu hospitalisation rate, and a 10% reduction in the flu intensive care admission rate. The main strains circulating continue to be flu A(H3N2) and flu B.

The report also shows that in weeks 50, 2017 to week 5 of 2018, statistically significant excess mortality from all causes continues to be observed in over-65s in England, this is currently similar to the excess mortality observed last season and lower than in 2014 to 2015. These excess deaths cannot with certainty be attributed to specific causes, but flu and the very cold weather that some areas have seen since Christmas are likely to be contributing factors.

Richard Pebody, Acting Head of the Respiratory Diseases Department at PHE said:

We are continuing to see flu circulate, with signs that flu activity is stabilising.

Rates of vaccination across all those eligible for the vaccine have increased on last season and we have vaccinated an additional one and a half million people. We are currently seeing a mix of flu types, including the A(H3N2) strain that circulated last winter in the UK and then in Australia and flu B.

It is important to practice good respiratory and hand hygiene and to get the vaccine if you are newly eligible, although we are now coming to the end of the vaccine season.

Previous updates

Thursday 1 February 2018

Seasonal flu levels remain high but are stabilising in the last week across the UK.

The latest Public Health England (PHE) report published at 2pm today, Thursday 1 February 2018, shows that seasonal flu continues to circulate across the UK, with rates across most indicators remaining stable. The statistics show over the last week there has been a stabilisation in the GP consultation rate with flu-like illness, a 7% reduction in the flu hospitalisation rate, and a 26% reduction in the flu intensive care admission rate. The main strains circulating continue to be flu A(H3N2), A(H1N1) and Flu B.

The report also shows that in weeks 50, 2017 to week 4 of 2018, statistically significant excess mortality from all causes continues to be observed in over-65s in England, although this currently remains lower than the excess mortality observed last season and in 2014 to 2015. These excess deaths cannot with certainty be attributed to specific causes, but flu and the very cold weather that some areas have seen since Christmas are likely to be contributing factors.

The 'Catch It, Bin It, Kill It' campaign continues to run across digital, radio and press advertising platforms to inform the public about the steps they can take to protect themselves and reduce spread of the virus by practising good respiratory hand hygiene.

Richard Pebody, Acting Head of the Respiratory Diseases Department at Public Health England said:

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Rates of vaccination across all those eligible for the vaccine have increased on last season and we have vaccinated an additional one and a half million people. We are currently seeing a mix of flu types, including the A(H3N2) strain that circulated last winter in the UK and then in Australia and flu B.

The best form of protection against flu is to get the vaccine if you are eligible and to practice good respiratory and hand hygiene, although we are now coming to the end of the vaccine season.

Whilst this is the most significant flu season since 2010 to 2011 in terms of GP activity, the ICU indicators taken overall suggest that it is less severe at this stage than 2010 to 2011. And in terms of the impact on excess mortality, we have not reached yet the levels seen in 2014 to 2015 and 2016 to 2017.

The flu virus can live for many hours on hard surfaces and therefore practising good hand hygiene can limit the spread of germs and transmission

of flu. People are advised to catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue, bin it, and then wash their hands afterwards to kill the germs. Practising good hand hygiene and giving eligible people the flu vaccine is the best defence against the virus.

People suffering with flu-like symptoms should catch coughs or sneezes in tissues and bin them immediately, wash their hands regularly with soap and warm water and frequently clean regularly used surfaces to stop the spread of flu. Avoid having unnecessary contact with other people if you or they have symptoms of flu.

Seasonal flu usually circulates for several weeks each year. The intensity of circulation depends upon the underlying population immunity, the circulating viruses and external factors such as the weather. It is an unpredictable virus and it is not possible to anticipate how flu levels will progress.

Amongst other diseases like norovirus that normally increase during winter, seasonal flu puts extra pressure on the NHS every year.

The latest data is available online. Currently 72.4% of adults over 65, 48.7% of adults with a long-term health condition, 47.1% of pregnant women, 44% of 3-year-olds, 42.6% of 2-year-olds and 63.9% of healthcare workers have received the vaccine.

[Press release: Clean Growth top of the agenda for ministerial visit to Teesside](#)

The region has the potential to exploit opportunities from future growth industries such as carbon, capture usage and storage (CCUS), district heating and the hydrogen economy.

The UK government has made a firm commitment to regeneration and clean energy production in the Teesside area, with an ambition for 25,000 new jobs and over £1 billion of investment across a 10-year period, and today, the minister spoke about making that a reality.

Energy Minister Claire Perry said:

Today I have seen the exciting opportunities here to regenerate this iconic site, and, crucially, bring skilled jobs and clean growth to the area. I look forward to seeing the development of these proposals to develop and breathe new life into this site.

The government has already invested substantial amounts in the area and the Autumn Budget set out a further £123 million of funding to continue work to secure the site. Today, the minister met Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen, the Local Enterprise Partnership, Clean Growth investors, the South Tees Development Company and members of the South Tees Site Company as well as taking a tour of the former steel site at Redcar and Cleveland.

Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen said:

Our concentration of industry along the coastline perfectly places the region as the go-to location for green energy proposals such as Carbon Capture and Storage. It is fantastic that government recognises our industrial strengths and has reaffirmed their commitment to developing this transformational proposal. I was delighted to share our ambitious plans with the minister today, and made clear to her that Teesside is ready and waiting to take this forward.

A move to low-carbon, clean energy offers a remarkable economic opportunity for our area and the UK as a whole. Our projects would attract inward investment, create jobs and put Tees Valley at the forefront of the clean energy revolution. Now we need to work constructively with government to push ahead and make these schemes a reality.

The site is of particular interest in the development of carbon capture usage and storage – which aims to capture carbon dioxide emitted from industry and power plants for permanent storage under the North Sea. This game-changing technology and many more exciting projects were discussed as part of today's visit.

Business Minister Richard Harrington was also in Teesside today setting out his vision through a keynote speech to workers, industry and local MPs at Community Union's Steel Sector Conference. The minister talked about his commitment to steelmaking regions across the UK and the importance of putting the sector at the heart of the UK's Industrial Strategy.

Last year, the government set out its plan for growth and regeneration across the UK with its [Industrial Strategy](#) aiming for an economy that boosts productivity and earning power throughout the UK. A key part of that is growing new jobs, and Teesside has a crucial role to play.

Notes to editors

Photos and videos of the visit are available by contacting gillian.capewell@beis.gov.uk.

Press release: New projects see UK space firms tackle global challenges

Improved disaster response in Commonwealth states and tropical disease control are among the goals of 10 new projects involving British space organisations, Science Minister Sam Gyimah announced today.

The Industrial Strategy highlights the importance of bringing together the UK's world-class research with business investment to develop technologies and industries of the future that benefit society, as well as our economy. The UK Space Agency's International Partnership Programme uses UK space expertise to deliver innovative solutions to real world problems across the globe. This helps some of the world's poorest countries, while building effective partnerships that can lead to growth opportunities for British companies.

The successful projects, worth £38 million in total, are led by a diverse range of organisations from the UK's growing space sector, from large companies such as Inmarsat and CGI, to start-ups such as Guildford-based Earth-i. The UK Space Agency and industry are working together to grow the UK's share of the global space market to 10% by 2030.

Science Minister Sam Gyimah said:

"The UK's space sector is going from strength to strength. It pioneers new technology and provides jobs for 40,000. Today I can announce that the space sector's capabilities are being put to use to tackle some of the world's biggest challenges.

"The UK Space Agency's International Partnership Programme will help developing countries tackle big issues like disaster relief and disease control, while showcasing the services and technology on offer from our leading space businesses."

The International Partnership Programme is part of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's (BEIS) Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF): a £1.5 billion fund from the UK Government, which supports cutting-edge research and innovation on global issues affecting developing countries.

There are 22 existing projects already delivering benefits, including a partnership between Inmarsat and the Philippine government to reduce the impact of natural disasters using satellite communications, which was called into action in December and January when tropical storms killed hundreds of people and displaced tens of thousands more to evacuation centres. The project used British technology and expertise to help relief workers get information in and out of the disaster zones which greatly increase the effectiveness of the response effort, helping them save lives and restore critical infrastructure.

Rupert Pearce, CEO of Inmarsat, said:

"Inmarsat was originally founded to save lives at sea and we are proud that, almost 40 years later, our robust, reliable satellite communication services are deployed throughout the world to assist following natural disasters and humanitarian crises, wherever they occur.

"With the invaluable support of the UK Space Agency, we have been able to

pre-equip disaster response teams in the Philippines with vital satellite communications solutions. This meant that when two deadly cyclones hit the country over a two week period, resulting in loss of life and serious damage to terrestrial communications infrastructure, Philippine authorities were able to utilise Inmarsat's mobile connectivity services to assess the damage and identify the needs of those regions most affected."

All IPP projects are match-funded by consortium members and international partners to ensure maximum value for money. The programme is fully compliant with Official Development Assistance (ODA) with the Independent Commission for Aid Impact recently reporting that the UK Space Agency had developed robust procedures for ensuring ODA eligibility and was thorough in its ODA compliance screening.

The UK Space Agency is also funding five Business Applications Ambassadors to work with industry across the UK. The Agency already supports a network of business incubators and the new ambassadors will advise on business applications and other opportunities in the UK.

Full list of new projects:

1) British Geological Survey, Nottingham: Modelling Exposure Through Earth Observation Routines (METEOR): EO-based Exposure, Nepal and Tanzania

Grant: £2.8 million

Target countries: Nepal and Tanzania (test countries), rolling out to all 48 Least Developed ODA countries

Theme: Disaster Management

At present, there is a poor understanding of population exposure in developing countries, which causes major challenges when making Disaster Risk Management decisions. METEOR takes a step-change in the application of Earth Observation exposure data by developing and delivering more accurate levels of population exposure to natural hazards. Providing new consistent data to governments, town planners and insurance providers will promote welfare and economic development in these countries and better enable them to respond to the hazards when they do occur.

2) Satellite Applications Catapult, Didcot: Space Enabled Monitoring of Illegal Gold Mining

Grant: £3.3 million

Target country: Colombia

Theme: Mining

This project is about improving detection and efficiency in monitoring illegal gold mining in remote forested areas in Colombia. The project will make use of freely available Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) data, and incorporate machine-learning techniques to show suspected areas of illegal mining, in a user-friendly web portal. The project will support the promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers, and a reduction in the health-related effects from the high rates of mercury contamination associated with illegal mining.

3) EARTH-i Ltd, Guildford: ACCORD

Grant: £2.7 million

Target countries: Kenya and Rwanda

Theme: Agriculture

Coffee is the second most traded commodity globally, with revenues directly benefitting farmers in developing countries. Despite this, in Kenya and Rwanda 67% and 80% of people respectively live in poverty, including most smallholder coffee farmers. Unpredictable weather, pests, diseases, nutrient depletion and other factors limit earning potential by hitting coffee quality and quantity. ACCORD will deliver advice from satellite Earth Observation to help smallholder coffee farmers make significant improvements to crop quality and yield, providing them with access to timely, geo-targeted advice through a simple mobile application. This will allow smallholder farmers to achieve higher incomes for their work, improving quality of life for their families.

4) Rothamsted Research, Harpenden: EcoProMIS

Grant: £3.9 million

Target Country: Colombia

Theme: Agriculture

The EcoProMIS project aims to help Colombian rice and oil palm farmers to improve productivity and stabilise incomes, allowing them to compete globally whilst responding to climate change and producing responsibly. The project uses satellite Earth Observation alongside environmental and crop data to research the impact of crop and ecosystem management on biodiversity, greenhouse gas emissions and productivity. The outcome will be a partnership of farmers, research institutes and industry experts that creates comprehensive sets of crop and ecosystem data. This data will be made freely available for the Colombian partners to improve the environmental, technical and financial efficiency of their processes. It will also provide information to insurance firms, government food processors and further beneficiaries to create income for sustainable knowledge.

5) HR Wallingford, Wallingford: An integrated dengue early warning system driven by Earth Observations in Vietnam

Grant: £4.1 million

Target Country: Vietnam

Theme: Health

This work will provide a tool that enables advance warning of likely dengue outbreaks, allowing public health authorities to mobilise resources to those most in need. The project will also provide forecasts of dengue fever under a range of climate change scenarios. The system will link Earth Observation data with climate forecasting and a land-surface model to predict for the first time the impacts of various elements (such as water availability, land-use, climate), on the likelihood of future dengue epidemics. The dengue forecasting tool will also include a water assessment module, delivering the additional benefit of improving water management in Vietnam's transboundary river basins.

6) Janus TCD, Stourbridge: Improved Situational Awareness In Fisheries (ISAF)

Grant: £5.5 million

Target Country: The Philippines

Theme: Illegal Fishing

The ISAIF project will use satellite technology to help the Philippine government tackle Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing in its waters. This project aims to halt the decline of a fisheries sector that employs more than 4 million people. The project will use a wide variety of data sources, including satellite data to understand the location, time and behaviour of specific vessels at sea. This will be combined with a satellite navigation application with an authentication tool through which Philippine fisherfolk confirm their compliance, creating a new digital barrier to IUU fishers within the supply chain. Outcomes will include better monitoring and enforcement of IUU by the Philippine government, improved safety, security and economic productivity for Philippine fisherfolk, benefits to the Philippine economy, and an improvement in the international reputation of Philippine fisheries.

7) CGI, Leatherhead: Peatland Assessment in SE Asia by Satellite (PASSES)

Grant: £2 million

Target Countries: Indonesia, Malaysia

Theme: Forestry

Tropical forest fires affect over 20 million people in South East Asia, leading to significant deteriorations in public health and premature mortalities as well as contributing to global CO2 emissions and other negative environmental impacts. Many fires occur over drained peatland areas. This project will use satellite observations and measurements to map peat condition, even when under a forest canopy. By monitoring water levels and improving hydrology in the peatland areas, the risk of fire can be dramatically reduced. By using freely available observations from satellites through the EU Copernicus programme and use of emerging industrial hosted processing capabilities, PASSES will prove that peatland monitoring is a cost effective way to reduce forest fires.

8) eOsphere Limited, Didcot: SIBELIUs: Improved resilience for Mongolian herding communities using satellite derived services

Grant: £1.6 million

Target Country: Mongolia

Theme: Disaster Management / Insurance

Mongolia is a large country with around 30% of its population dependant on livestock herding who are exposed to extreme weather events (dzuds). Dzuds are increasingly exacerbated by climate change and are highly damaging to Mongolia's economy and devastating for the poorest herders. A typical dzud can impact tens of thousands of herders, many of who will lose all their livestock leaving them in extreme poverty, with associated impacts for the wider economy. The SIBELIUs project will provide greater dzud-resilience for herders by providing the Mongolian Research Institute of Meteorology, Hydrology and Environment with new sources of satellite data, plus a geo-spatial database for distributing new and upgraded environmental products to key stakeholders supporting herding communities.

9) United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR): CommonSensing
Grant: £9.6 million
Target Countries: Fiji, The Solomon Islands, Vanuatu

The overall aim of CommonSensing is to improve resilience towards climate change, including disaster risk reduction, and contribute to sustainable development in three selected Commonwealth Small Island Developing States (SIDS): Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The project will combine earth observation data to provide stakeholders with access to important information regarding disaster risks (including disaster risk planning, food security, climate risk and other environmental concerns). This information will be accessible to beneficiaries through a web portal and mobile applications. CommonSensing project will create long-term investment loops, define priorities for future climate funds proposals and ensure a sustainable service-platform, running three years after IPP project end.

10) HR Wallingford, Wallingford: Minimising the risk of tailings dams failures through the use of remote sensing data
Grant: £2.7 million
Target Country: Peru
Theme: Mining

Tailing dams are earth embankments used to store toxic mine waste and effluent which can be more than 100m high. Their rate of failure is high, due to poor design regulations and less rigorous construction methods than for normal water-retaining dams, especially in low-income countries. This project will use Earth Observation and Global Navigation Satellite System technologies to allow for more effective monitoring of the dams and therefore quicker action can be taken to avoid the tailings dams failures. The project will help to reduce damage to ecosystem services downstream of mines upon which many vulnerable communities rely for both their source of water and their livelihoods.

Press release: Government announces Mr Justice Langstaff will lead inquiry into the Infected Blood scandal

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, David Lidington, today (8 February) announced that Mr Justice Langstaff will chair the public Inquiry into the infected blood scandal.

Mr Justice Langstaff will be the full time Chair of the Inquiry from 1 May following his retirement from the High Court. In advance of this, he will be consulting further with people affected, their families and other stakeholders on the Inquiry's terms of reference.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, David Lidington said:

The infected blood scandal of the 1970s and 80s is a tragedy that should never have happened. We must now ensure it can never happen again.

I am determined that this independent Inquiry will give victims and their families the answers they have spent decades waiting for.

I want to ensure the Inquiry is now established as quickly as possible. I thank Justice Langstaff for agreeing to lead this important work and Government will provide him with all the support he needs.

Mr Justice Langstaff said:

Providing infected blood and plasma products to patients truly deserves to be called a major scandal. I intend through this Inquiry to be able to provide both some well-needed answers to the victims and their families, and recommend steps to ensure that its like will never happen again.

Nothing less than a thorough examination of the evidence will suffice: and the process needs to lead to a full report within the shortest timescales that such thoroughness can accommodate.

Once the further consultation on the terms of reference has taken place, the Minister for the Cabinet Office will confirm the final terms to the House of Commons.