

Guidance: Sewage sludge in agriculture: code of practice

Read this code of practice if you produce sewage sludge, or if you farm, own or manage agricultural land where it's used.

The code tells you:

- the benefits and hazards of using sludge in agriculture
- when and where you're allowed to use sludge
- the treatments you can use
- what tests you must carry out
- how to protect the environment and avoid public nuisance

Consultation outcome: Environmental impact assessment: Nuclear Decommissioning Regulations

Updated: Government response published.

The Nuclear Reactors (Environmental Impact Assessment for Decommissioning) Regulations require all civil nuclear reactor dismantling and decommissioning projects to obtain consent before being allowed to commence. This ensures that projects likely to have significant effect on the environment take due measures to protect and reduce their environmental impact.

This consultation invites comments on proposals for implementing amendments of the European Union Directive on environmental impact assessments in so far as the Directive applies to consent for nuclear reactor decommissioning projects in the UK under the Nuclear Reactors (Environmental Impact Assessment for Decommissioning) Regulations.

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.