

COP15 – UK nature agencies set out vision to restore nature to avoid ‘profound threat to humanity’s future’

The UK’s leading nature agencies have today set out their plan to boost nature recovery at home and abroad ahead of the key international biodiversity summit in Montreal taking place next month.

In a joint statement the UK’s six official nature conservation bodies said that there has never been a more critical time to invest in restoring and enhancing nature across the UK and stressed how the economy cannot thrive without progressing environmental protections.

At an event at the Royal Society in London, nature conservation agencies from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland stressed that we must expand our ambition to achieve the UK’s commitment to halt species decline, go further and faster on nature recovery and do much more to align action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, and tackle climate change.

The statement was made at an event hosted by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) at the Royal Society in London in the run up to the 15th Convention on Biological Diversity which is due to take place in Montreal, Canada next month, after two years of delay.

At the event, the UK’s six nature conservation agencies pledge to support governments, businesses and society to work together to:

- Commit to ambitious global targets at COP15 to enhance biodiversity
- Support governments around the world on nature recovery with the UK’s world-leading knowledge and skills in the nature sector
- Drive public and private investment in nature-based solutions
- Embed environmental security and nature recovery into all decision making
- Deliver on the UK government’s policies to protect and enhance nature

Many of these commitments have been driven by the ground-breaking [Nature Positive 2030 research](#) which was published at the COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow last year and shows through a series of case studies how nature recovery is not just necessary, but also achievable and affordable.

Tony Juniper, Natural England Chair said:

Next month’s meeting of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity represents the best and last chance we have to halt and reverse the decline of Nature around the world. This isn’t just about saving rare species, it’s about sustaining the web of life upon which humankind ultimately depends, for food, water, health and climate

regulation. Safeguarding all of that means that as the world charts a route to low carbon it must at the same time go high Nature.

We will support the UK Governments to bring countries together and agree an ambitious plan for the recovery of the natural world backed by strong targets for 2030, making this a 'Paris moment' for Nature. The meeting has the chance to significantly increase the mobilisation of resources to implement such a plan. We know from numerous examples of nature recovery that we have helped deliver that this will be money well spent, and certainly cheaper than dealing with the consequences of not taking action".

Minister for International Nature, Lord Benyon said:

A healthy natural environment is the cornerstone of a healthy climate, secure and clean water supplies and a resilient food supply.

Only by working collaboratively together, sharing knowledge and arguing for high ambition we will achieve a set of robust commitments in Montreal which restore the natural world and tackle the twin challenges of nature loss and climate change

At the Royal Society event the leaders of the UK's nature conservation agencies said that they stand ready to support the four UK Governments both as advisers and as delivery partners.

At the COP27 UN Climate Change Conference which concluded last week in Egypt, the UK government set out its ambitious commitments to recover the UK's nature and provide a secure, sustainable future for all.

Further information:

- The Convention on Biological Diversity is a summit which usually takes place every two years and is attended by the countries which signed up to the Convention on Biological Diversity at an Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. At the summit countries will agree actions to tackle biodiversity loss, set global targets and monitor progress towards them.
 - Leading figures from all of the UK's nature conservation bodies were in attendance at the Royal Society event in London hosted by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) including Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, NatureScot, Council for Nature and the Countryside (Northern Ireland) and DAERA (NI).
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UK concerned about Russian violations of international humanitarian law: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you to both co-chairs for hosting this joint Permanent Council-Forum for Security Cooperation (PC-FSC) meeting on this important issue. I wish to thank the two speakers for their interventions. The UK continues to fully support the crucial work of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and its unique role in upholding International Humanitarian Law (IHL). It is vital that we all uphold our commitments on IHL.

Since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we have been seriously concerned about Russian violations of International Humanitarian Law. The [two Moscow Mechanism reports](#) show we were right to be concerned. The reports noted "clear patterns of serious violations of IHL attributable mostly to the Russian armed forces". Including the magnitude and frequency of the indiscriminate attacks. Carried out against civilians and civilian objects. Reports of torture. The execution of civilians. Unlawful detention. Enforced disappearances. Targeting civilians on their streets, in their cars, on their bicycles, on their balconies and in their homes. Victim-activated booby traps. The rape of women. The rape of children. Violence towards men. The killing of journalists. Targeting of hospitals, of schools. The use of cluster munitions. Shallow graves. The threat of cholera. The use of filtration centres. These constitute an affront to humanity.

Furthermore, [ODIHR's Interim Report](#) expressed "clear concern" for Russia's "general disregard" for the "basic principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions set out by IHL, which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity".

Mr Chair, the targeting of critical civilian infrastructure has continued since these reports were published. Russia is trying to maximise civilian hardship over winter. Last week up to 10 million households were left without electricity. Water supplies have been hit. And we know that vulnerable groups suffer disproportionately – be it the elderly, those with medical conditions or disabilities. As President Putin will be aware, attacks which disproportionately kill civilians, and destroy objects indispensable to the survival of civilians, are prohibited under international humanitarian law. Evidence of war crimes has been mounting including in Bucha, Irpin Borodianka and Izyum with more and more allegations coming to light in Kherson. These actions are morally bankrupt.

Both Moscow Mechanism reports document acts of sexual violence carried out by members of the Russian Armed Forces. This evidence exists because of the bravery of survivors, who, by telling their stories, break down stigma and enable justice. Their courage is striking when juxtaposed with the cowardice of their attackers, who hide behind propaganda spread by Russian government officials. Denying crimes of sexual violence is tantamount to defending them.

Colleagues, I repeat the message that the UK has delivered many times: the use of sexual violence as a weapon is a war crime. We, the international community, will end impunity for sexual violence and hold those responsible to account.

And it is not only civilians suffering. There is mounting evidence that Russia has failed to abide by its obligations under the [third Geneva Convention](#) – that all prisoners of war should be treated humanely, afforded appropriate medical treatment and basic necessities, and be protected from humiliating and degrading treatment. The UN Officer of the High Commissioner of Human Rights has documented the use by Russian forces in Ukraine of prolonged beatings, dog attacks and putting people in stress positions. Mr Chair – Wars have rules and these prohibit a detaining power from prosecuting prisoners of war for having participated in hostilities, or for lawful acts of war committed in the course of armed conflict.

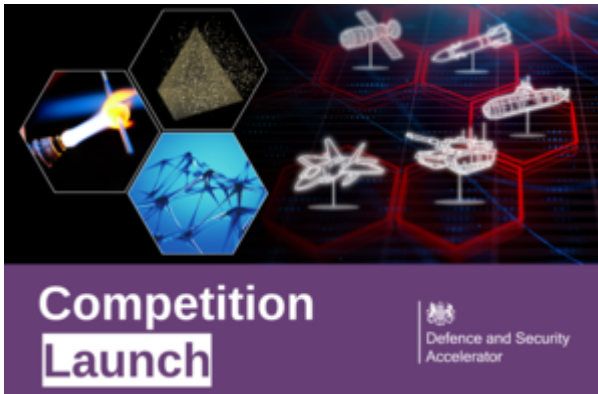
We need accountability. Those members of the Russian Government and individual members of the Russian military who have breached international humanitarian law and committed war crimes must be held to account. We are working through the OSCE, with Ukraine's Prosecutor General and with international bodies like the International Criminal Court to pursue accountability for these crimes. The countless victims of Russia's illegal invasion deserve justice.

In closing, every day since the 24 February, we have seen the tragic consequences in Ukraine of Russia's aggression, but every day we have also been reminded of the courage and resilience of the Ukrainian people. The United Kingdom will continue to do everything we can to support Ukraine, including through diplomacy, humanitarian aid and supporting accountability. The single biggest step to preventing further breaches of international humanitarian law in the OSCE area would be for Russia to withdraw fully and unconditionally from the whole territory of Ukraine. Let us ensure that becomes a reality.

[DASA seeks Advanced Materials innovations to shape the future of defence](#)

News story

DASA has launched a new Innovation Focus Area to find Advanced Materials innovations to support generation-after-next defence capabilities



- DASA has launched a new Innovation Focus Area (IFA) called Advanced Materials for Defence
- Funding provided by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory's (Dstl) Advanced Materials Programme
- This IFA seeks Advanced Materials innovations across 2 challenge areas

The [Defence and Security Accelerator](#) (DASA) is pleased to launch a new Innovation Focus Area (IFA), [Advanced Materials for Defence](#). Advanced Materials is identified in the [Defence Technology Framework](#) as a critical technology family to drive innovation across defence. This IFA aims to harness these strengths in the UK landscape to provide innovative solutions in Advanced Materials to support generation-after-next defence capabilities.

DASA seeks innovations across two challenge areas:

- Challenge 1: Intelligent materials and structures
- Challenge 2: Materials for enhanced thermal management

Key dates and funding

This Innovation Focus Area will run for at least [two funding cycles of the Open Call](#).

DASA expects to fund several proposals between £100K – £300K.

Do you have a novel idea or concept? [Read the full IFA document and submit a proposal](#).

Advanced Materials for Defence challenge areas

This IFA has 2 challenge areas.

Challenge 1: Intelligent materials and structures

This challenge is focused on materials and structures that can either sense changes in their environment, actuate a change under extreme environmental conditions, or a combination of both. This challenge is also concerned with the lifing and ageing of deployable or morphing structures.

For this challenge area, DASA seeks innovations that consider operating environments such as:

- Complex weapons: Smart / functional structural materials
- Air: Materials to reduce maintenance requirements
- Space: Techniques for assessing the ageing and degradation of materials used in deployable systems
- Land: New technologies for material condition, self-diagnosis and repair, and novel multi-functional materials to support survivability through improved concealment
- Maritime: Develop technologies to support the rapid build, modification and deployment of naval vessels across different operating environments

In addition to the operating environments listed above, this IFA is also interested in understanding emerging innovations in functional, animate and metamaterials under the FAME project. The FAME project focusses on the development of vital enabling materials knowledge, concepts and technologies for later exploitation into systems. FAME is a cross-cutting project that encompasses all operating environments.

Challenge 2: Materials for enhanced thermal management

This challenge is focused on materials and structures that can withstand extremes of temperatures.

For this challenge area, DASA seeks innovations that consider operating environments such as:

- Complex weapons: Materials to enable increased endurance, range or operating temperatures
- Air: Materials to help reduce mass, volume and cost of thermal management systems and enhance other areas of performance
- Land: Materials to enhance the survivability and sustainment of platforms and users
- Maritime: Materials to improve the effectiveness of thermal management systems for on-board systems, allowing more heat transfer to take place in the same space

For a more detailed breakdown this IFA's challenge areas, [read the full IFA document](#).

Submit a proposal

Do you have an Advanced Material innovation that will support generation-after-next defence capabilities?

[Learn more and submit a proposal](#).

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UK and South Africa to work more closely on tackling pandemics and climate change

- UK and South Africa launch new agreement on health, building on close work on climate and other global challenges.
- Commitment made as South African President Ramaphosa, UK Health Secretary and HRH The Earl of Wessex visit the Crick Institute, the biggest biomedical research facility in Europe, and Kew Gardens.
- Additional UK funding will aid future pandemic preparedness across 18 African countries.

British and South African researchers will save lives in the UK, South Africa and beyond – thanks to nine collaborative research projects announced today.

Institutions from across the UK and South Africa will undertake research into vital issues from health systems and financing to mental health and surgery.

The projects formed part of a new agreement to enhance the UK-South Africa health partnership, signed by the South African Health Minister and UK Health Secretary today at the Francis Crick Institute in London, during the President of South Africa's State Visit.

The new agreement also includes new UK funding to bolster South Africa's National Institute for Communicable Diseases and is supporting genomic sequencing to improve antimicrobial resistance surveillance on the African continent.

With UK support, more than 17,000 genomes have been sequenced to date in South Africa. The new support will enable detection of dangerous diseases faster across at least 18 African countries, building resilience into our health systems and protecting the world against future pandemics.

The partnership will prioritise building vaccine manufacturing in Africa so that vaccines can be developed and reach those who need them faster, including the most vulnerable. This in turn will mean the world will be better prepared for future pandemics.

The UK and South Africa are also working together to protect global health systems from the increasing threat of climate change.

UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said:

It is vital for countries across the world to work together to tackle global challenges like climate change and pandemic preparedness. This will benefit us all.

The UK and South Africa have shown global leadership in joining together to protect people by preventing the spread of dangerous diseases, and by working to halt climate change – including through the ground-breaking Just Energy Transition Partnership, to help countries move away from using fossil fuels.

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said:

Strengthening the partnership between the UK and South Africa is not only crucial in improving health and patient outcomes in both countries but it is also vital to add to the global resilience of our health systems.

Through this partnership we will reinforce our shared commitment to ensuring the world is better prepared for future pandemics through joint research and building capability for disease surveillance including antimicrobial resistance.

It was excellent to meet President Ramaphosa at the Francis Crick Institute, where staff showcased the best of innovative research technology the UK has to offer. I look forward to building on this important relationship with South Africa in the months ahead, to drive more effective global health systems, promote clinical and regulatory excellence and above all protect patient safety.

UK Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Thérèse Coffey, and His Royal Highness the Earl of Wessex also accompanied President Ramaphosa to Kew's Royal Botanical Gardens, where a partnership with South African institutions is helping to preserve biodiversity and address climate change.

A long-term partnership between Kew and South Africa National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), a key player in South Africa's sustainable development, is ensuring the long-term survival of South Africa's exceptionally rich plant diversity. The President and the Minister were able to see the flourishing fauna, such as the King Protea and heard from Kew's experts on biodiversity.

UK Secretary of State for the Environment Thérèse Coffey said:

This visit highlights the fantastic biodiversity of South Africa and our longstanding scientific collaboration to protect nature. Both countries are working together to tackle the twin challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss.

At the upcoming UN Convention on Biological Diversity meeting in Montreal, we aim to make this year the Paris moment for nature – to end species extinction, increase protections and support a sustainable future for our planet.

Recognising South Africa's status as one of the world's most nature diverse countries, Ministers discussed the importance of the upcoming negotiations for a post-2020 global biodiversity framework at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity meeting in Montreal. The negotiations are an opportunity for the globe to agree a Paris moment for nature, to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and to significantly increase the mobilisation of resources to tackle nature loss.

Notes to Editors:

- Pictures from the Kew Gardens and Crick Institute visits will be shared shortly to accompany this release.

Health Partnership:

- The updated strategic health partnership was signed by the Health Ministers of the UK and South Africa during the visit to the Crick Institute. It will drive more effective health systems globally, by:
 - Increasing shared knowledge and expertise, including by drawing on experience from the NHS in England.
 - Improving capacity through training and development.
- The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), through the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), has supported nine research projects led by South African and UK institutions, from 1 August 2022 onwards.
- These projects focus on a diverse range of themes (health systems, non-communicable diseases including mental health, as well as surgery, palliative care, and HIV), UK funding has been provided to six distinct South African research institutions across five cities (Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria, Stellenbosch, and Johannesburg).
- To date the UK's Fleming Fund has invested in the partnership with the National Institute of Communicable Diseases in South Africa to support Whole Genome Sequencing for antimicrobial resistance surveillance across Africa, which has provided state-of-the art lab equipment, training and analytical support.
- The UK and South African commitment to ending preventable deaths comes following the welcome appointment of President Ramaphosa as Chair of the Global Leaders Network which is advocating for women's, adolescents' and children's health.
- The Francis Crick Institute is the biggest biomedical research facility under a single roof in Europe with researchers from over 70 countries including South Africa.
- Focuses of the Institute include research into TB-HIV co-infection. The Crick African Network includes research on malaria.

Climate Partnership:

- The UK has provided over £250 million towards international climate finance in South Africa over the last decade.
- South Africa is the world's 13th largest CO2 emitter.
- At COP26 in Glasgow the UK, France, Germany, the US and EU (the IPG) announced an ambitious long-term Just Energy Transition Partnership with

South Africa that aims to support the decarbonisation of South Africa's economy. A 'Just' approach underpins the plan, aiming to ensure those most directly affected are not left behind.

- Ministers from both countries were able to discuss the ground-breaking Just Energy Transition Partnership, with an [Investment Plan](#) set out at COP27. It set out the financial requirements over the next 5 years to begin South Africa's 20-year energy transition. The IPG is mobilising an initial \$8.5bn to catalyse the first phase of the programme.
- South Africa is the third most biodiverse country in the world, home to a third of all succulent plant species, 10% of the world's overall plant species, one-sixth of the world's marine species along its vast coastline, as well as 7% of birds, 5% of mammals, and 4% of reptiles. Much of South Africa's biodiversity is at present greatly endangered, with poaching and illegal trade driving some species to extinction.
- Kew's seed banking collaboration with SANBI is now in its third decade, starting in 1996.

[UK Government statement on Supreme Court ruling on draft independence referendum bill](#)

Press release

Alister Jack said that the UK Government was committed to working with the Scottish Government on the issues that matter most to people in Scotland.



The UK Supreme Court has today determined that the draft Scottish Independence Referendum Bill is outside the powers of the Scottish Parliament.

The Secretary of State for Scotland, Alister Jack, said that the UK Government was committed to working with the Scottish Government on the issues that matter most to people in Scotland.

Alister Jack said:

We note and respect the unanimous ruling from the Supreme Court today.

People in Scotland want both their governments to be concentrating all attention and resources on the issues that matter most to them. That's why we are focussed on issues like restoring economic stability, getting people the help they need with their energy bills, and supporting our NHS.

Today alone, 11.6 million UK pensioners – around one million in Scotland – are starting to receive up to £600 to help with their energy bills this winter.

As the Prime Minister has made clear, we will continue to work constructively with the Scottish Government in tackling all the challenges we share and face.

Notes to editors:

1. For further information contact the Scotland Office on 07920 155186 / pressoffice@ukgovscotland.gov.uk
2. Today's [Supreme Court judgment](#) in relation to the reference to Supreme Court by the Lord Advocate under paragraph 34 of schedule 6 to the Scotland Act 1998.
3. The UK Government's [written submissions](#) to the Court.
4. The UK Government set out its arguments at the [hearing on Tuesday 11 and Wednesday 12 October 2022](#).

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