

Multi-million pound investment brings environmental improvements

Press release

The Environment Agency has worked together with partners to invest almost £3m in environmental improvements in the North East over the past year.



The Tipalt Burn

More than 21 hectares of habitat has been created or improved in the North East over the past year as part of a £3million programme of work to improve the environment for people and wildlife.

Almost 12km of river has been improved and more than 8,000 trees planted, while 32 hectares of stillwaters have been enhanced for fishing.

The North East Environment Programme is managed and delivered by the Environment Agency working mainly in partnership with government backed Catchment Partnerships, bringing together river and wildlife trusts, local authorities and other organisations to improve the environment.

There were almost 50 partners involved in this year's £3million programme, contributing £461,000 in funding.

Key projects progressed in 2021/22 include:

- Blyth Estuary Habitat Enhancement – 27 habitat areas for wildlife created at Port of Blyth to boost the ecology of the estuary
- The EU Life Wader project led by Natural England will see the Environment Agency deliver restoration work on the Rivers Till and Breamish
- The Wilds of Wanney project aimed at improving water quality in the Upper Wansbeck tributaries delivered 1.4km of protection to the Delf Burn and supported the restoration of 4.5ha of habitat
- The Northumberland Crayfish Strategy continued its work to protect the endangered white clawed crayfish with the development of safe breeding

'Ark' sites, a captive breeding programme and an increased public awareness programme.

- Design and installation of a floating ecosystem on the Tyne Estuary at Newcastle Quayside – the first of its kind on a tidal waterbody – as part of the Tyne Estuary Habitat Enhancement project.
- Progressing a Tipalt Burn project to identify priority projects that will improve water quality in the burn, including tree planting, reducing run-off from land into the water and habitat creation.
- Gaunless Reconnected saw interventions at farms to reduce pollution running off farmland and into the river, including cattle crossings, improvements to farm yards and gates. It saw 2,700 trees planted, fencing installed and 300m of riverbank restored.
- Wear Estuary Improvements saw the creation of a 150m² of saltmarsh along the River Wear Estuary – important habitat for marine animals and birds.
- Fish for Tees, aimed at improving fish passage at five sites and opening up 76km of river for fish migration made progress at all sites, with design and delivery the next steps.
- At Billingham Beck, options were developed for improving fish passage and creating and improving habitat.

Fiona Morris Environment Planning and Engagement Manager for the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

There's been a huge variety and scale of projects in this year's programme that have been started and delivered, from protecting iconic species, enhancing and creating habitat and improving water quality.

Together with our partners we are committed to driving forward innovative environmental improvements and continuing to deliver this ambitious programme of environmental improvements for people and wildlife in the North East.

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A vision of the future: £750K available for novel early stage concepts that may disrupt the defence landscape

- DASA has launched a new Themed Competition: Disruptive Science and

Technology Impacting the Future of Defence

- Funded by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl).
- Up to £750k funding available for disruptive, early stage ideas and concepts may be used as the basis for further research within the Defence Science and Technology Futures (DSTF) Programme

The [Defence and Security Accelerator](#) (DASA) is pleased to launch a new Themed Competition, [Disruptive Science and Technology Impacting the Future of Defence](#). Run on behalf of the [Defence Science and Technology Laboratory](#) (Dstl), this competition seeks exciting concepts, technologies, or ideas that may disrupt the future of defence.

The outcome of this competition is anticipated to be a pool of novel Science and Technology (S&T) ideas / concepts that may disrupt the defence landscape and have the potential to lead to radical change.

Key dates and funding

£750k (exc. VAT) funding is available for this Themed Competition. The value of each funded submission is £50k.

The deadline to submit a proposal is midday (BST) 12 October 2022

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

Getting ready for the technologies that will shape the future defence landscape

The Defence Science and Technology Futures (DSTF) Programme identifies novel early stage research which may have a significant game-changing or disruptive impact on future military capability.

The DSTF Programme recognises the need to look beyond the current, developed science and technology landscape, and this Themed Competition has been launched to support this need.

DASA and Dstl seek ideas that may underpin generation-after-next technology, concepts or approaches and could disrupt traditional technologies or ways of thinking. Proposals submitted to this competition will help defence understand how current novel Science and Technology (S&T) might develop and impact defence priorities, to help plan for the future, combat threats and take advantage of opportunities.

We are interested in low Technology Readiness Level (TRL) ideas (TRL 1-2) from any discipline. Proposals submitted for this competition do not need to fulfil contemporary defence requirements.

Requirement areas

This competition has one requirement area.

Requirement 1: Evaluating Disruptive S&T ideas and their impact on the Future of Defence

The goal of this requirement is to help Dstl develop an understanding of ideas to help determine their potential to be disruptive. Proposals should examine how the idea may fit within the future defence landscape, rather than the confines of contemporary technologies and capabilities.

Ideas that might help solve this requirement include:

- early stage science and technology that currently do not have a defence application
- ideas identified through horizon scanning or technology watch, that may be disruptive and should be researched further
- ideas developed through brainstorming or other workshopping approaches that may have the potential to disrupt the future defence landscape but are at a very low Technology Readiness Level (TRL 1-2)

Any ideas submitted to this requirement must have a theoretical basis supported by reasoned explanation.

To learn more about the challenge area of the competition, [read the full competition document here](#).

Webinar

21 September 2022

This webinar will provide more information on the challenge areas and how to submit a proposal. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions in the Q&A. If you would like to get involved, please register on the [DASA Eventbrite page](#).

[Register now](#)

Submit a proposal

Do you have a potentially disruptive idea or concept that may disrupt the future of defence? Submit your idea and help the DSTF Programme improve its ability to research and prepare for the future defence technology landscape.

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

UK and Guernsey strike landmark reciprocal healthcare deal

- Minister of State for Health Maria Caulfield signs the arrangement with Guernsey's Chief Minister in central London
- People planning to travel to Guernsey next year are encouraged to take their UK Global Health Insurance Card which is being expanded and improved post Brexit

UK residents visiting the Bailiwick of Guernsey will benefit from free necessary healthcare, and vice versa, after a landmark deal was signed today (Wednesday 31st August).

The reciprocal healthcare arrangement – which comes into force on 1st January 2023 – will mean UK residents can access emergency and necessary healthcare services for free in Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, or Herm, when on a temporary visit lasting up to six months.

Attendance at Accident and Emergency and urgent GP appointments will be included in the new arrangement, while those with a pre-existing condition will be able to receive necessary treatment, like kidney dialysis or chemotherapy, if this is arranged and agreed prior to travel. Small charges may apply for services that people routinely pay for in the UK, such as prescriptions.

The UK's new reciprocal healthcare eligibility card – the Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) – will be the main eligibility document used to access healthcare in Guernsey. Those planning to travel to Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, or Herm next year are being encouraged to take their GHIC with them.

Around 200,000 UK residents visit the Bailiwick of Guernsey each year, and they are currently individually liable for the full cost of medically necessary or emergency care while visiting the territory.

Minister of State for Health Maria Caulfield said:

Post Brexit we are focussed on delivering deals which mean UK travellers can use their GHIC in more places, including in the Bailiwick of Guernsey where UK visitors will receive free healthcare should they need it during their visit.

None of us can plan for unexpected medical emergencies, and I want to encourage anyone planning to travel to Guernsey next year to take their GHIC so they get all the benefits of this deal.

This arrangement will help both residents of the UK and those across the Bailiwick of Guernsey, and is testament to the strength and close cooperation across the British family.

Residents from the Bailiwick of Guernsey will also be able to access necessary healthcare when visiting England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland on the same basis as someone living in the UK.

Health authorities from the Bailiwick will also be able to refer patients to the NHS for pre-authorized treatment at cost, allowing them to source vital and urgent healthcare not available locally.

Chief Minister of Guernsey, Deputy Peter Ferbrache said:

I'm very pleased to have today signed a new reciprocal health arrangement with the UK on behalf of the Bailiwick of Guernsey. It has been a priority for our community for some years, due to the social and economic links between the UK and the Islands of Guernsey, Alderney, Sark and Herm.

When it comes into effect early next year it will benefit both island residents and visitors from the UK, making travel easier whether it's for leisure, business or to see family and friends.

Following our departure from the European Union, the UK is now negotiating reciprocal healthcare arrangements with countries outside of the EU. This includes expanding the GHIC to countries outside of the European Economic Area and Switzerland, like the Bailiwick of Guernsey.

The GHIC was introduced to gradually replace European Health Insurance Cards (EHIC), and gives UK residents' rights to emergency and medically necessary healthcare in multiple territories, including across the whole of the European Union and Switzerland

The GHIC is free to obtain from the official GHIC website. People should apply at least 2 weeks before they plan to travel to ensure their card arrives on time. Those with an existing EHIC can use it up to expiry, and should someone forget either card alternative arrangements can be made.

The government is still advising people travelling abroad to take out travel insurance which includes medical cover. This is because the GHIC may not provide cover for all events, like medical repatriation back to the UK, ski or mountain rescue, or for any treatment in a private facility

Tax avoidance promoter directors named for the first time

Tax avoidance bosses have been named for the first time in the latest move to help protect the public.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has used new powers today (31 August 2022) to publicly name [directors of tax avoidance promoting companies](#), with customers being warned to leave the firms' schemes or risk large tax bills.

Adam Fathers is the director of tax avoidance promoter Saxonside Ltd while Stuart John Brooke is behind tax avoidance promoter The Umbrella Agency Ltd.

Naming the directors behind these schemes will alert the public to steer clear of any avoidance schemes promoted by other companies with the same directors.

Mary Aiston, HMRC's Director of Counter Avoidance, said:

Naming the people behind tax avoidance schemes is a crucial step in helping customers stay clear of current and future schemes they promote.

Our recent action should serve as a stark warning to promoters who think they can get away with peddling avoidance schemes. We will continue to use all the powers at our disposal to crack-down on promoters.

Customers who think they're involved in a tax avoidance scheme, should withdraw from the scheme and contact us for help as soon as possible.

The Umbrella Agency Ltd and its director have been exposed for the first time today. HMRC has also exposed the director of the previously named promoter Saxonside Ltd, with users of both schemes warned to withdraw or risk large tax bills.

Both schemes' users enter an employment contract with the promoter and are then paid the National Minimum Wage. Scheme users then receive the remainder of their income disguised in a bid to avoid paying Income Tax and National Insurance. Schemes such as these often wrongly promise their users can avoid National Insurance and Income Tax.

This latest step in HMRC's crack-down on tax avoidance promoters comes as a [stop notice](#) was issued earlier this month. This prevents the promoter from selling their scheme or face penalties of up to £1 million.

A total of 15 companies involved in promoting tax avoidance schemes have been named by HMRC. This is not a complete list of all tax avoidance schemes currently being marketed, nor a complete list of all promoters, enablers, and suppliers.

HMRC also provides people with a range of tools to help them steer clear of avoidance schemes, as a part of the [Tax Avoidance – Don't Get Caught Out](#) campaign. These tools include an [interactive risk checker](#), [payslip guidance](#), and [case studies](#) demonstrating the risks of becoming involved in a tax avoidance scheme and the warning signs the public should look out for.

People who believe that they are involved in a tax avoidance scheme are advised to contact HMRC as quickly as possible by calling 03000 534 226. HMRC is also urging people who have been encouraged to get into a tax avoidance scheme or have come into contact with someone selling tax avoidance schemes to report this by using their [online form](#).

Further details about both Saxonside Ltd and The Umbrella Agency Ltd can be found on HMRC's regularly updated list of [named tax avoidance promoters](#).

New powers granted to HMRC under Section 86 of the Finance Act 2022 now enable HMRC to name directors, shareholders and company officers of companies suspected of promoting tax avoidance. They also enable HMRC to share the details of the schemes being promoted much faster than before. This is the first time that HMRC has used these new powers.

Further information about our [strategy on tax avoidance schemes and promoters](#).

[Ministers meet to continue work on tackling winter pressures](#)

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Kit Malthouse has led a meeting of ministers and officials from across government to drive forward preparatory work for tackling pressures this winter.

The meeting follows work over recent weeks to identify key pressure points that will affect the public, including the global rise in energy prices, the cost of living and pressures on the NHS.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has been chairing these meetings throughout the summer to discuss the key operational decisions that can be made to reduce these risks once a new administration is in place.

Ministers and officials have discussed priority areas, such as health, energy, cost of living, supply chain disruption, labour market shortages, and industrial action, that have the potential to compound together over the coming 18 months.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Kit Malthouse said:

My chief priority has been to make sure that we are prepared for the significant challenges we expect to face this autumn and winter, and I have held regular meetings to make sure departments maintain pace and grip on this essential work now, and in the coming months, as this will be a marathon not a sprint.

The cost of living, driven in part by higher energy prices, is biting for individuals, families and businesses, and the NHS is already under pressure – and that's ahead of the flu season. These risks have potentially severe impacts, stacking up on the most vulnerable people in society, and it is vital that we develop robust plans urgently to mitigate their impact and come up with solutions.

I've tasked departments with identifying the key operational decisions that should be taken without delay across priority risks such as health, energy, cost of living, supply chain disruption, labour market shortages, and industrial action, that have the potential to compound together. They will also map out the key moments over the next 18 months where specific groups of society may be significantly impacted, including the clinically vulnerable, socially and economically deprived, the elderly, the young, and the disabled, and produce further options so that decisions can be made quickly once a new administration is in place.

Over the coming weeks, the Cabinet Office will work with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to continue ensuring that gas and electricity system operators have the right tools to respond to fluctuations in supply and demand. Work is also underway with key international partners to monitor and share information on energy supply and demand.

The Treasury and BEIS will also prepare options for the new administration on possible energy market interventions to lower prices, bringing down bills and helping manage overall supply.

Today's meeting included ministers and officials from HM Treasury, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Department for Transport, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The meeting also builds upon the work already in train ahead of the new administration next week, and the increase of the energy price cap. This work includes:

- Allocating £37 billion of help for households, including the £400 discount on energy bills this winter, and £1,200 of direct support to help with the cost of living
- The Department of Health and Social Care and the UK Health Security Agency are further developing their plans for health resilience, including to boost the NHS and Adult Social Care workforce, including a new taskforce for international recruitment
- The Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy is continuing to strengthen its contingency plans for winter energy security – Equinor and Centrica recently signed a major agreement to shore up Britain's gas supply over the next three winters, adding around one billion cubic metres of gas per year to our supply

The meeting also follows the recent announcement by Kit Malthouse reforming emergency planning and response in the Cabinet Office. A National Resilience Framework Team in the Planning and Analysis Secretariat will take a deeper look at the government's approach to risk and how it is mitigated, as well as collecting and analysing live data to improve future responses to emergencies. While the Cabinet Office's COBR Unit will continue to oversee preparedness and response to emergencies and other moments of acute pressure which might arise this winter.