

Tyre particles are contaminating our rivers and ocean, study says

A major government-funded [research study](#) published today suggests particles released from vehicle tyres could be a significant and previously largely unrecorded source of microplastics in the marine environment.

The study is one of the first worldwide to identify tyre particles as a major and additional source of microplastics. Scientists have previously discovered microplastics, originating from microbeads in cosmetics and the degradation of larger items such as carrier bags and plastic bottles, in marine environments globally – from the deep seas to the Arctic.

Following the [government's ban](#) on rinse-off microbeads, which is one of the toughest in the world, the Defra-funded study led by the University of Plymouth now reveals vital new information that will improve our scientific understanding of how tiny particles from tyres, synthetic fibres from clothing and maritime gear also enter the ocean.

This project will be used to guide future research already underway on marine plastic pollution and the impact of human activities on the marine environment as the government continues in its fight against the scourge of plastics. This includes the 5p plastic bag charge – which has led to 15 billion fewer bags distributed – and plans to end the sale of plastic straws and stirrers and plastic-stemmed cotton buds later this year.

The study shows that tyre particles can be transported directly to the ocean through the atmosphere or carried by rainwater into rivers and sewers, where they can pass through the water treatment process. Researchers estimate this could place around 100million m² of the UK's river network – and more than 50million m² of estuarine and coastal waters – at risk of contamination by tyre particles.

Its findings also highlight some of the optimal places for intervention; for example, that fitting filters to washing machines could be less effective than changing fabric designs to reduce fibre loss, with another study at the University having recently shown that normal wear and tear when wearing clothes is just as significant a source of microplastic pollution as release from laundering.

Domestic Marine Minister Rebecca Pow said:

Reducing plastic pollution in the ocean is one of the greatest environmental challenges that we face. This study will help us face that challenge by identifying areas for future research, such as changes to roadside drainage and textile design.

The UK is at the forefront of a global fight against the scourge of plastics. In addition to the pioneering ban on microbeads and the

5p plastic bag charge, plans are also in place to end the sale of plastic straws, stirrers and plastic-stemmed cotton buds.

The study was directed by [Professor Richard Thompson OBE, Head of the International Marine Litter Research Unit](#), and Plymouth researchers Dr Imogen Napper and Florence Parker-Jurd. It also involved Dr Geoff Abbott from the School of Natural and Environmental Sciences at Newcastle University, who developed a breakthrough method using mass spectrometry to detect tyre-derived microplastics in the environment, Dr Stephanie Wright from Kings College London, and Simon Hann from Eunomia Research & Consulting Ltd.

Professor Thompson oversaw Defra's first research project on microplastics and their impact on marine life nearly a decade ago. It was this, and some of his team's subsequent work, that led to the UK's pioneering ban on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products in 2018.

Professor Richard Thompson OBE said:

Scientists have long suspected that tyre debris is posing a hidden threat to the marine environment. However, there have been few studies measuring abundance in aquatic environments. Now that we have a clearer indication on quantities we need to gain a better understanding on transport in the environment and the potential impacts on marine life.

This study gives us a real insight into the importance of tyre wear as a source of microplastics. However there are still many unknowns, and compared with other forms of microplastics we know relatively little about tyre wear particles. So it is important to continue to take steps to reduce emissions of better understood sources like fibres from textiles and the fragmentation of larger items.

What this study also does is provide further evidence of the complex problems posed by microplastic pollution. We have looked at three pathways and shown that all of them are substantive pathways to the environment. As we work to understand their potential distribution and impacts it is important to also work together with industry and policy makers to identify potential solutions which may include changes in behaviour, changes in product design and waste management.

Defra is continuing to invest in research on waste management, ocean littering and microplastics to support the delivery of the government's 25 Year Environment Plan and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. This research will help identify evidence gaps and recommendations to tackle marine plastic pollution, both in the UK and globally.

The University of Plymouth was recently presented with the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education for its pioneering

research into microplastics pollution and its policy impact in the UK and globally.

[PM calls with António Guterres and Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus: 26 May 2020](#)

News story

Prime Minister Boris Johnson had calls with the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, and with Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization.



The Prime Minister had calls this evening with the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, and with Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization.

On both calls, the Prime Minister set out the UK's support for the international effort to defeat coronavirus and for the work of the UN and WHO in helping to coordinate the global response.

The Prime Minister and Dr Tedros agreed on the importance of an independent investigation into the origins of the coronavirus outbreak, so we can learn lessons to prevent future pandemics.

The Prime Minister also confirmed he will participate via video message in the UN's upcoming Financing For Development in the Era of COVID-19 event to map out an equitable, green recovery from this crisis.

Both Dr Tedros and Secretary-General Guterres reiterated their support for the UK-hosted Global Vaccine Summit on June 4th, which will raise vital funds to save the lives of millions of children worldwide.

Government significantly boosts UK PPE supply with more than 100 new deals

- Over 100 new suppliers contracted around the world to significantly boost UK PPE supply
- Domestic production also ramped up significantly with contracts signed to manufacture 2 billion items of PPE in the UK
- Over 1.48 billion items of PPE delivered to the frontline in England with tens of millions more items distributed in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales

A significant boost to PPE supplies that should help meet demand in the health and social care sectors has been announced by government today.

It has signed deals with more than 100 new suppliers from around the world in a challenging global market, including securing a further 3.7 billion gloves to help meet the expected demand.

The government has also supported industry to significantly boost domestic production with companies signing contracts to manufacture over 2 billion items of PPE in the UK, including facemasks, visors, gowns and aprons.

Since the start of the outbreak, over 1.48 billion items of PPE have been delivered to the frontline in England, and tens of millions more items distributed in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Just yesterday alone, 3.3 million masks, 11.8 million aprons, 33,000 gowns and 36.2 million gloves were delivered to health and social care settings in England.

As demand for PPE hit record levels during the global pandemic, government and industry joined forces to build a PPE distribution network from scratch. With the help of the Armed Forces, the NHS Supply Chain now delivers PPE to 58,000 settings including care homes, hospices and community organisations.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Last month, I set a national challenge to ensure we continue to supply enough PPE to those on the frontline of this battle.

We have now signed deals with over 100 suppliers across the world to secure more PPE, and at the same we have ramped up domestic production. We have now ordered 2 billion pieces of PPE from homegrown firms which is also great news for jobs and the economy, and over 3 billion pieces from abroad.

Worldwide demand for PPE has never been higher so I want to thank Paul [Lord Deighton] for his work in ensuring that PPE continues to be delivered to where it is needed.

The UK has worked with numerous international partners to procure additional PPE supplies throughout the pandemic. A new team has been established to secure new supply lines from across the world and will continue to strengthen and diversify the supply chain.

We're rapidly progressing over 14,500 offers from suppliers and ensuring they meet the safety and quality standards that our NHS staff need, as well as prioritising offers of larger volumes. We have already contracted over 100 new suppliers able to deliver at the scale and pace the UK requires.

Domestic production is simultaneously being ramped up to unlock new avenues to get PPE to the frontline as part of the government's 'Make' programme, headed up by Lord Paul Deighton, who is leading the government's efforts to secure PPE and ensure this gets to where it is needed. As part of this, he is driving forward coordination of the end-to-end process design and manufacture of new domestic PPE supplies.

The government is in contact with over 350 potential UK manufacturers and contracts have been signed to manufacture over 2 billion items of PPE in the UK.

This includes:

- a deal for 70 million face masks agreed with company Honeywell this month
- Don & Low manufacturing 12 million metres squared of fabric for gowns over the next 6 months
- Jaguar Land Rover manufacturing 14,000 visors a week for healthcare staff

Lord Paul Deighton said:

As unprecedented demand for PPE continues around the world, British industry has stepped forward to strengthen the UK's response and increase PPE supplies.

We have already secured millions of PPE items through deals with British industry, and continue to work with hundreds of potential manufacturers to further bolster our domestic supply chain now and in the future.

From this week, GPs and small care homes can also register on the PPE Portal, a new online portal developed in collaboration with eBay to help primary and social care providers to order critical PPE, as it is scaled up nationally.

The PPE Portal has been tested with the sector and is now being scaled up

nationally over the coming weeks. During this phase of the roll-out, GPs and small residential and domiciliary social care services will be invited to register on the portal.

We are focusing on small care providers because our data shows that, although they account for half of all care provision, they seem to be less likely to be registered with wholesalers. It's therefore important that we ensure that they have the option of quickly joining the portal should they need to.

This forms part of our national effort to ensure critical PPE continues to be delivered to those on the frontline.

A small residential social care provider is defined as one with 24 beds or fewer, while a small domiciliary care provider has 99 clients or fewer.

[Further £1 million invested into England's fishing industry](#)

News story

A £1 million grants scheme supporting innovative ways to sell fish and shellfish has awarded the first grants to projects across England.



The Domestic Seafood Supply Scheme was set up in April to help projects that will increase the sale and consumption of locally caught seafood. It was a competitive scheme, judged by an independent panel of, fishing industry, government and Marine Management Organisation representatives.

The panel today approved 13 significant projects that have the potential to deliver wider collective benefits. It is seeking further clarification on a number of other projects which will be considered at a further panel meeting on 8 June 2020. Applicants will be notified from Wednesday 27 May.

The fund and the grants scheme were administered by the Marine Management

Organisation.

The Scheme is funded by HM Treasury and the Maritime and Fisheries Fund and is a joint endeavour between Defra, MMO, Seafish and the fishing industry.

It is part of the government's £10 million Fisheries Response Fund to assist the fishing industry sectors most impacted by Covid-19, also administered by MMO.

Seven weeks since the launch of this fund, payments of up to £10,000 each have been made to more than 1200 fishing and aquaculture businesses to help with their fixed business costs.

The judging panel includes representatives from industry and government, including The National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations (NFFO), the New Under Ten Fishermen's Association (NUFTA), The Cornish Fish Producers Organisation (CFPO), Grimsby Fish Merchants Association, Seafish, the Marine Management Organisation and Defra.

Guidance has also been published on the [further support available for the fishing industry](#).

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Health and Social Care Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 26 May 2020

[Coronavirus press conference 26 May 2020](#)

Good afternoon and welcome to Downing Street for the daily coronavirus briefing.

I'm joined by Professor John Newton, our test and trace coordinator.

Before I provide an update on the work we are doing to combat coronavirus, I'd like to update you on the latest figures.

In total, 3,681,295 tests have been carried out in the UK, including 109,979 tests yesterday;

265,227 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 2,004 cases since yesterday.

Sadly, of those who tested positive for coronavirus, across all settings,

37,048 people have now died. Yesterday, across the UK, 134 deaths were reported.

But for the first time since 18 March, I am very encouraged to confirm that yesterday there were no deaths from coronavirus recorded in Northern Ireland.

I want to pay tribute to Robin Swann, my opposite number, and all of those across the NHS and public health in Northern Ireland, and the people of Northern Ireland who have shown such resolve to be able to bend the curve down and thank them for all the work they have done.

While the news might not be this positive every day, I look forward to continuing to work with them to keep the virus under control in Northern Ireland.

Today's figures from the ONS show across the UK as a whole, the lowest number of deaths from coronavirus for six weeks.

This is a national endeavour. And whatever the headwinds, as a country we can't let up on this.

We are past the peak. We're flattening the curve. We protected the NHS and the number of deaths is falling. We must keep our resolve.

I just want to say a massive thank you to everybody, over the Bank Holiday weekend, who stuck to the social distancing rules.

And to especially my colleagues in the NHS and in social care who are doing so much.

Even though we are through the peak, there are still 8,802 people in hospital with coronavirus in the UK.

And there are still 98 NHS colleagues in hospital with coronavirus, including some of whom who are seriously ill.

So we must maintain our focus. And there are two areas I'd like to provide an update on today. PPE, and treatments. Both incredibly important for the future of tackling this disease – PPE and treatments.

PPE

First, we have been working hard to build our supplies of personal protective equipment.

I know how important this is, especially to colleagues on the frontline.

We all heard in the early weeks of this crisis, the calls from the frontline for more, and better PPE.

And we all saw the global scramble to acquire it.

I have been completely open about the scale and the difficulties of this

challenge – building a new supply chain from scratch and of course the operational challenge of delivery.

General Sir Nick Carter, Chief of the Defence Staff, said it himself – this is the single greatest logistical challenge he had faced in 40 years of service.

And in response, thanks to the Armed forces and so many others, including so many in the NHS, we have seen a mammoth effort.

We have ramped up domestic production. And I can announce that we have now signed contracts to manufacture 2 billion items of PPE here in the UK.

I set a national challenge here. And I'm absolutely delighted that Lord Deighton has stepped up and is helping us to deliver it.

Around the world, we have signed deals with over 100 new suppliers, including agreeing contracts for a further 3.7 billion gloves.

Whilst we continue to improve the logistics, and work hard to get everyone the PPE they need, these new supplies mean we are not simply keeping up with demand – but are able to begin to replenish our stockpiles.

There is a lot further to go on PPE, as on so many things, but we have made significant progress, and I'd like to thank everyone involved.

And PPE is of course so important as it's about protecting the people who protect us. We will do that for as long as this virus remains on our shores.

Research and development

Next, I wanted to update you on some of the remarkable R&D into treatments that is taking place all across the UK.

One of Britain's greatest strengths is our life sciences and research. And we are leading the world in the clinical trials being done here.

As I said at this podium last week, the very nature of scientific enquiry means that not every project will bear fruit.

But I am determined that we will explore every possible avenue.

The RECOVERY trial is the world's largest trial of potential coronavirus treatments.

And because our NHS is a universal system, which we are all part of, we have some of the best data and can do some of the best research.

Today I can announce that we are beginning a new trial, for selected NHS patients, of an anti-viral drug, called remdesivir.

There have already been some promising early results on coronavirus patients, with early data suggesting it can shorten recovery time by about around four

days.

As you can understand, we will be prioritising the use of this treatment where it will provide the greatest benefit. This is probably the biggest step forward in the treatment of coronavirus since the crisis began.

These are very early steps. But we are determined to support the science, and back projects that show promise.

I'd like to thank the NHS, the MHRA, the devolved administrations because this is UK-wide, and Gilead the pharmaceutical company, for their work in making this happen.

After all, it is worth remembering that in the battle against this virus, we are all on the same side.

So we will keep working across the world to develop the vaccines and the treatments – and indeed the vaccines – that will help us turn a corner.

But until a treatment or a vaccine comes good, there is no simple way to defeat this virus.

So we must not lose our resolve.

So please – stay alert, control the virus and save lives.