

Renewable energy innovation boosted by £37 million government funding across the UK

- £32 million government funding to increase UK production of sustainable biomass, which can be used as a renewable energy source
- further £5 million to support innovative new technologies that will generate hydrogen from biomass and waste
- biomass can be used for low carbon energy, and will play a key role as the UK scales up renewables to end dependency on expensive fossil fuels

Innovative biomass projects across the UK have today (Thursday 4 August) been awarded £37 million in funding, as the government drives forward its plan to scale up domestic renewable energy, including from biomass.

Increasing the growth of elephant grass (miscanthus), farming seaweed off the North Yorkshire coast, and increasing the harvesting capacity for willow are among 12 projects receiving a share of £32 million funding under Phase 2 of the [Biomass Feedstocks Innovation Programme](#), which aims to find new ways to increase biomass production in the UK.

Also announced today are 22 winners of the first stage of the [Hydrogen BECCS programme](#), with £5 million funding to help develop innovative technologies to produce hydrogen, a clean fuel that emits only water vapour when combusted, from sustainable biomass and waste.

Biomass, a sustainable plant material, can be used to produce biofuels and sustainable aviation fuels, or to create chemicals for household cleaning products and bio-plastics. Biomass' ability to deliver at scale has already been proven, having generated 12.6% of total UK electricity in 2020, forming an important part of our plans to generate more home-grown power and strengthen Britain's energy security.

Energy Minister, Greg Hands, said:

Accelerating home-grown renewables like biomass is a key part of ending our dependency on expensive and volatile fossil fuels.

This £37 million of government investment will support innovation across the UK, boosting jobs whilst ensuring greater energy security for years to come.

Backed by the independent Climate Change Committee, biomass will form an important part of the UK's future renewable energy mix, which will be vital for ensuring the UK's energy security and reducing reliance on expensive fossil fuels.

Through Phase 2 of the Biomass Feedstocks Innovation Programme, projects will be developed from the design stage, [which was supported with £4 million government funding](#), into full demonstration projects, showcasing new methods to grow sustainable biomass materials, which can be used to produce low-carbon energy. The projects will boost biomass productivity in the UK, through breeding, planting, cultivating and harvesting of organic energy materials.

Today's winners include:

- Aberystwyth University, Wales, which is receiving over £2 million for their 'Miscanspeed' project, looking at accelerating the breeding of high-yielding, resilient miscanthus (elephant grass) – grass varieties that are well-suited for biomass use
- SeaGrown Limited in Scarborough, which is receiving over £2.8 million to develop new techniques to farm and harvest seaweed off the North Yorkshire coast, taking advantage of seaweed's qualities as a source of biomass and its ability to remove carbon from the atmosphere
- Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute in Belfast, which is receiving over £1.5 million for their 'EnviroCrops' project, developing an app to enable farmers and land managers to make informed decisions about planting perennial energy crops, helping to optimise biomass choices for a given land area

The Hydrogen BECCS Innovation Programme supports the development of technologies to produce hydrogen generated via 'BECCS' (bioenergy with carbon capture and storage).

BECCS technology can uniquely offer the ability to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, as the CO₂ absorbed during the growth of the sustainable biomass and the organic content found in waste can then be permanently removed from the atmosphere using carbon capture technologies.

Hydrogen BECCS technologies will support the government's plan to build a hydrogen economy, making hydrogen a clean fuel to use in hard-to-decarbonise sectors such as transport and heavy industry, while also removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

This government backing for innovation in biomass production will help support the government's plans to scale up and accelerate clean, renewable energy in the UK, to protect the UK's domestic energy security. Supporting trailblazing hydrogen BECCS technology will help further the government's ambition to see hydrogen as the clean super-fuel of the future, while also encouraging green investment into the UK and supporting the creation of new jobs.

The Hydrogen BECCS projects receiving funding today include:

- the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, which is receiving £220,239 to develop an innovative and sustainable process to obtain hydrogen from the organic matter present in different types of waste
- the University of Leeds which is receiving £249,984 for their H₂-Boost

- project, which aims to produce biohydrogen for the UK transport sector
- 17Cicada Ltd in Stevenage which is receiving £237,065 to develop technology to produce hydrogen from bacteria

Stuart Fitzgerald, Managing Director of White Horse Energy said:

White Horse Energy are delighted to proceed into Phase 2 of the Biomass Feedstocks Innovation Programme with our mobile pelletisation innovation. Our technology is going to revolutionise the production of low carbon, domestically produced energy for the UK market, and we can't wait to get started!

Kevin Chown, Chief Operating Officer at Kew Projects said:

BECCS systems producing hydrogen have huge potential for delivering commercially-viable greenhouse gas removal, whilst supporting the development of the hydrogen economy with low-cost hydrogen supply.

KEW have identified innovative approaches for the separation of the H₂ product from the CO₂ for sequestration, and the BEIS funding will be instrumental in enabling a more efficient and cost-effective process to be demonstrated and accelerate H₂BECCS deployment.

Dr Paul Carver, CEO of New Energy Farms EU Ltd said:

The BEIS initiative is a key programme to assist UK climate change goals. New Energy Farms EU Ltd is very pleased to be able to contribute its efforts and technologies towards expanding UK biomass feedstock supply.

Paul Willacy, Managing Director of Compact Syngas Solutions said:

We are delighted to have been successful in obtaining government funding for our Hydrogen BECCS Innovation project. The ability to capture and store the carbon from our gasification process while making hydrogen, takes us one step closer to producing cleaner and greener hydrogen and to support the drive to net zero.

The Biomass Feedstocks and Hydrogen BECCS Innovation Programmes are both funded through the BEIS £1 billion [Net Zero Innovation Portfolio](#).

Biomass Feedstocks Innovation Programme

Hydrogen BECCS Innovation Programme

- The Hydrogen BECCS programme supports the development of core technologies essential for the generation of hydrogen from biomass and waste with the ability to capture carbon
 - Phase 1 will be followed by a second phase, where the Phase 1 winners will be able to apply for further funding to support the demonstration of their hydrogen BECCS technology
 - see the [list of all the successful Phase 1 winners](#)
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[Hondurans invited to apply to the Chevening Scholarships](#)

World news story

Chevening is the UK government's international scholarships programme, funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and partner organisations.



Successful Chevening candidates come from a diverse range of countries and backgrounds, but they all demonstrate the passion, vision and skills needed to shape a better world.

There are many benefits to being selected, including fully funded tuition fees, access to some of the best quality education in the world, exclusive networking opportunities, and the chance to explore the UK's diverse culture.

At the end of your scholarship, you will join our diverse community of over 50,000 global alumni. You will return home equipped with the knowledge and networks to bring your ideas to life and thrive in your career.

Applications are open until 1 November 2022.

Apply [here](#).

[Guatemalans invited to apply to the Chevening Scholarships](#)

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England Coast Path takes a step forward in Hampshire.

- The nearly 52 mile continuous walking route takes you from Calshot to Portsmouth via Gosport.
- The Calshot to Gosport stretch and the Gosport to Portsmouth stretch are the first complete sections of the England Coast Path in Hampshire to open.
- These new sections, the 21 and 22 to open, will form part of the 2,700 mile long England Coast Path, which will become the longest walking route in the world.

Summer is here and there is a new trail for Hampshire residents and visitors to enjoy. The newest sections of the England Coast Path will help connect people with nature and provide a wealth of health and wellbeing opportunities.

This easy to follow walking route along the Solent coast, with its unspoiled countryside, busy marinas, industrial heritage, historic castles and wildlife conservation sites. Has been opened by Natural England today.

This route will eventually help connect the country's entire coastline into one long National Trail. The walk will take people through some of the finest landscapes in England. As well as the many coastal towns, cities and ports which have shaped this island nation.

Excitingly for the first time in the history of public access, legal rights of public access will be secured to typical coastal land. This includes beaches, dune and cliffs, allowing walkers to access places they've never been before.

Allison Potts, Natural England Area Manager, said:

This new trail covers a wealth of unique environments. It includes the unspoiled countryside with its abundance of wildlife. The industrial and bustling maritime Solent and beside 1 of the most densely populated areas on the south coast of England.

At a time when the benefits of connecting with nature are clearer than ever. It is fabulous that we are opening up this nearly 52 mile walking route on the banks of the Solent for people to enjoy.

Calshot to Gosport

This route starts at Calshot Spit, a popular beach and water sports location. It is also a natural shelter to the Calshot Nature Reserve where birds like oyster catchers and ringed plover can be seen.

Heading northwest towards Hythe, you have sight of the areas industrial heritage – the decommissioned Fawley Power Station and the Fawley Oil Refinery. Once at Hythe waterfront, a short hop on the Hythe Ferry will take you across to Southampton Town Quay, a busy international port with many historic sites.

Once you cross the River Itchen, you carry on the route through Woolston and Netley, where you might glimpse a 16th century castle and ruins of the 13th century Abbey. You then pass the Royal Victoria Country Park, which was once the home of the biggest military hospital in the Victorian Empire and a popular tourist attraction.

Continuing on to Hamble-le-Rice and through Hamble Common, there are more sites of historical and archaeological interest. There are remains of the 16th century St Andrews Castle, a 19th century gun battery and a second world war anti-aircraft gun emplacement.

A short ride on the Hamble-Warsash Ferry (also known as the 'Pink Ferry') takes you across the River Hamble. Then along the shore through the Hook-with-Warsash Local Nature Reserve. Many species of wading birds and wildfowl can be spotted here, including turnstones, linnets and skylarks. In the shingle you can also see plant species such as sea kale, sea beet and yellow thorned poppy.

The final part of the stretch takes you along the clifftop coast path to Meon Shore and Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve. Then down to the shoreline at Lee-on-the-Solent.

Gosport to Portsmouth

From Lee-on-the-Solent you pass through Stokes Bay, and inland around Browdown Military Training Area before heading to Gilkicker Point. This area includes the Browdown Site of Scientific Special Interest (SSSI) and the Gilkicker Lagoon SSSI. Although the lagoons saltiness creates a harsh environment where species have to adapt to survive, 5 species of mollusc of national rarity live in the lagoons.

The route then heads inland around Fort Monckton and back to the coast around Clayhall before reaching the Gosport Ferry. You pass the perimeter of the historic Royal Clarence Yard and Royal Naval Hospital. Then carrying on over Millennium Bridge, past Gosport Waterfront then on to Fareham, passing the marina and creek.

The path continues around the headland with views of Pewit Island Nature Reserve, where the whole of Portsmouth Harbour and its iconic Spinnaker Tower can be seen. These impressive sights continue up to Portchester Castle.

You pass through Port Solent Marina and eventually follow the seawall using the Pilgrims' trail with views of Whale Island. Home to HMS Excellent, the oldest shore training establishment within the Royal Navy, and its headquarters. The route continues past the Continental Ferry Port and beside HMS Nelson.

Approaching Portsmouth you pass by the Historic Dockyard, home to HMS Victory, HMS Warrior and the Mary Rose Museum. Then through Gunwharf Quays, a vibrant waterside shopping and dining location. The route passes the impressive Round Tower site at the mouth of the Harbour. Originally ordered to be built in wood by Henry V in 1418, the tower was rebuilt in stone by Henry VIII. The route concludes at the Historic Old Portsmouth home to a small fishing fleet and fish market at Camber docks.

Councillor Russell Oppenheimer, Executive Member for Recreation, Heritage and Rural Affairs at Hampshire County Council, said:

The completion of this stretch of the England Coast Path is really great news for local residents and visitors to the area.

It will provide easier access to Hampshire's spectacular and diverse coastline, helping to connect people with nature.

We are delighted that it will provide an uninterrupted link for the first time between a number of fantastic outdoor attractions managed by the county council. Including Royal Victoria Country Park, Calshot and Hook with Warsash Nature Reserve.

Councillor Lisa Mitchell, Cabinet Member for Housing and the Green Environment at Southampton City Council, said:

We're honoured to be part of this national quest to make England's coastline more accessible.

Southampton has a fantastic mix of coastline, green spaces and the city centre, so forming part of the national England Coast Path project is something we're very proud of.

We look forward to welcoming more people to enjoy the path and explore Southampton at the same time.

Councillor Lynne Stagg, Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation at Portsmouth City Council, said:

We fully support this great way of encouraging more people to explore our coastline on foot, and we welcome the new walkers this will bring to our city.

Portsmouth is a fantastic city to walk around or explore however you can, with streets full of history, and surprises round every corner. It's also mostly flat, so good for people of all abilities.

Professor Gavin Parker, Chair of the New Forest National Park Authority, said:

We're pleased to have played a part in the establishment of this landmark route along the outstanding coast of the New Forest.

Particularly by ensuring the signs in the National Park are all made with sustainably harvested New Forest oak and were installed by local contractors.

Many thanks to the landowners and other stakeholders who have helped make this happen.

Further information

You can find images for sections of the stretch [here](#). Please credit Natural England.

The nearly 52 mile (83.5 kilometre) route will become part of the [England Coast Path](#). The 2,700 mile long distance walking route and England's newest National Trail currently being developed around the entire English coast by Natural England.

Our proposals for the Calshot to Gosport stretch (23.3 miles / 37.5 kilometres) were submitted to government in November 2019 and were approved in November 2021.

Our proposals for the Gosport to Portsmouth stretch (28.69 miles / 46.7 kilometres) were submitted to government in June 2019 and were approved in March 2022.

Natural England worked on the 2 stretches, which form a continuous walking route, with a wide range of partners and landowners. The Calshot to Gosport stretch: New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA), Hampshire County Council and Southampton City Council. The Gosport to Portsmouth stretch: Hampshire County Council and Portsmouth City Council.

The route is easily accessed via public transport and there are plenty of locations along the trail for refreshments and with accommodation.

The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 places a duty on the Secretary of State and Natural England to secure a long-distance walking trail around the open coast of England. This together with public access rights to a wider area of land along the way for people to enjoy.

Natural England is working on the entire coastal route. [See the map showing a timetable for the work](#).

As well as new sections of the trail, there are improvements to existing access along the coastline which:

- identify a clear and continuous way marked walking route along this part of the coast. Bringing some sections of the existing coastal footpath closer to the sea and linking some places together for the first time.

- allow the route to 'roll back' if the coastline erodes, shifts or slips, solving the long-standing difficulties of maintaining a continuous route along the coast.

[See more information](#) and www.nationaltrail.co.uk.

The [CountrysideCode](#) recently updated, is the official guide on how to enjoy nature and treat both it, and the people who live and work there, with respect.

Find out more about this stretch of the England Coast Path and Natural England on our social media channels: twitter.com/naturalengland

[Defra updates on Independent Review into Labour Shortages in the Food Supply Chain](#)

Defra has today announced that John Shropshire will chair the Independent Review Into Labour Shortages in the Food Supply Chain. Mr Shropshire is an industry veteran, who stepped down from his role as CEO of major horticulture producer G's Fresh Group last year.

He will be supported by an expert panel that draws in expertise from across the farming, fisheries, processing and manufacturing aspects of the supply chain.

As set out in the [Government Food Strategy](#), the Government recognises the sector cannot sustainably rely on migrant labour, especially in light of global pressures elsewhere. The [Independent Review into Labour Shortages in the Food Supply Chain](#) will consider the challenges facing food and farming businesses to recruit and retain the labour they require and will provide recommendations for industry and Government to consider. The review will encompass the roles of automation, domestic employment and migration routes.

Today's announcement builds on actions taken by the Government to support farmers through the current challenges they are facing, including [bringing forward direct payments](#) to farmers to help with cashflow which are now being paid in two instalments. Additionally, the Government has launched a [review](#) of [supply chain fairness in the pig sector](#) and has committed to responding to a [review](#) exploring how to fast track the development and adoption of automation across horticulture.

The final report and will be published in 2023 and the Government response will follow.

Environment Secretary, George Eustice said:

I want to thank John Shropshire for agreeing to lead this Independent Review into Labour Shortages in the Food Supply Chain. His industry knowledge and experience make him an ideal candidate to chair the review.

Whilst labour shortages are affecting countries around the world, we have already boosted the number of visas available through the seasonal workers route to 40,000 and extended it to include poultry and ornamental horticulture, and we are working to encourage people to take up jobs in the sector.

Labour is a key issue for British farmers and farming and this report will give the government vital insight into how to address it in future.

John Shropshire, chair of the Independent Review into Labour Shortages said:

Our farming and food supply sectors are facing multiple challenges, and labour shortages are contributing to this. This review will help us understand how we can address labour shortages and boost productivity in the food supply chain.

I've worked in the horticulture industry for many years and, along with the panel of experts supporting the review, I hope we can make some clear recommendations that will have a long-term impact on reducing pressure on farmers and increasing food security.

The Government encourages all sectors to make employment more attractive to UK domestic workers through offering training, careers options, wage increases and to invest in increased automation technology. To help with these efforts, Defra is working with industry and the Department of Work and Pensions to raise awareness of career opportunities within the food and drink sector among UK workers.

Chair:

- John Shropshire OBE – John Shropshire was CEO of G's Fresh Group until 2021 and is chairman of G's Fresh Limited. He joined the family farming and marketing business, which was founded by his father Guy Shropshire, after completing a BSc Hons in Agriculture at Newcastle University in 1976. G's Fresh Group is a major UK horticulture business which has won several national industry awards recognising its progress in technical and product innovation, exports and environmental management. He is also Co-Chair of the Modern Slavery Intelligence Network (MSIN) a non-profit organisation created to share intelligence to aid in disrupting modern

slavery and labour exploitation within the UK food industry.

Expert panel:

- Fiona Dawson CBE – Fiona Dawson is a non-executive director at Marks and Spencer, the Lego Group, and Kerry Group. She was also previously Global President of Mars Food and Multisales, served as President of the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD), and was Vice President of the Food and Drink Federation. In 2021 Fiona was awarded a CBE for services to women and the economy.
- Martin Ford – Martin Ford is Technical & Sustainability Director at Greencore UK, a leading manufacturer of convenience foods. He has previously worked for a number of food businesses, including Northern Foods and Morrisons.
- Mark Greet – Mark Greet has led Falfish (a Cornish wholesaler and processor of wild-caught fish and farmed fish), where he was a managing director until 2021.
- William Kendall – William Kendall is a food entrepreneur, and farms conventionally and organically in East Anglia. He led the acquisition of embryonic brands New Covent Garden Soup Company, Green & Black's and latterly Cawston Press and then their successful growth strategies. He co-founded an early-stage venture fund and remains engaged in venture investing. Over the years he has had board responsibilities in sectors as varied as online grocery, hotels, natural building materials and garden centres. William advises a number of family businesses: he is a Trustee of the Grosvenor Estate and of the Gascoyne Cecil Estate which both have substantial farming interests and he is a director of Samworth Brothers which is one of the UK's largest fresh food makers.
- Dr David Llewellyn CBE – David Llewellyn is the former Vice-Chancellor of Harper Adams University, a position he held from 2009 until 2021. He is currently retired. He was also a founding member of the Skills Development Board which helped create the Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture (TIAH). He was awarded a CBE in the 2022 New Year Honours for his services to higher education, agriculture, and rural industries.
- Helen Sisson – Helen Sisson is Group Technical Director at 2 Sisters Food Group, a food manufacturer with strong presence across poultry, chilled foods, and baked goods. She has over 30 years' experience in Food Manufacturing having previously worked for food businesses including Greencore, Sutherland, Hazelwood Foods and prior to this within the dairy sector. Helen currently sits on a number of industry panels, including membership of the British Retail Consortium (BRC) International Advisory Board and IGD Technical Leadership Forum. Helen is also a Non-Executive Director of Campden BRI and a Trustee of the charity FareShare.

The full list of sectors considered by the Review are:

- Farming Sectors, including: Pigs, Eggs, Poultry, Red Meat, Dairy, Arable and Edible Horticulture
- Primary Processing, including: Meat Processing and Seafood Processing
- Food and Drink Manufacturing

We plan to publish further details of the review in due course.