

Press release: Bees' Needs Champions awards celebrate pollinator heroes

A 'Bee City' and a successful reintroduction scheme for the short-haired bumblebee are among the innovative projects highlighted today by Defra Minister Lord Gardiner as inspirational examples of action to protect our pollinators.

The annual [Bees' Needs](#) Champions awards, hosted at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, celebrated 17 bee boosting projects from volunteers, schools, charities and councils across the country which are helping pollinators thrive both in the countryside and in our towns and cities.

From buzzing bumble bees to beautiful butterflies, the UK's 1,500 species of pollinators play a crucial role, helping our flowers, fruit trees and crops to grow and contributing £400-680million per year due to improved productivity.

Speaking at the Bees' Needs Champions Awards, Minister for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity Lord Gardiner said:

We must all be thankful for our essential pollinators who do such vital work on our behalf, flying from crop to crop, tree to tree, helping us to grow our food. The champions I had the pleasure to meet today are doing exceptional things to return the favour and look after our pollinators. We must not leave them to it. We can all play a part.

Whether it is leaving grass uncut to give bees a home over winter, or inspiring young people to be the pollinator protectors of the future, our combined efforts make a real difference.

Among the champion projects creating a buzz were the Bumblebee Conservation Trust's short-haired bumblebee re-introduction scheme and the Secret Garden project in Salisbury with their 'Bee City' and 'Bee Trail'.

Goldthorpe Primary School in Barnsley and St Albans Primary School in Havant also featured for their pollinator-encouraging enterprises, including building bee hotels, creating wildlife meadows and campaigning in the local community. St Albans school has set up a 'pollinator promise' to get the local community involved, too.

Outdoor education teacher at St Albans Primary School, Julie Newman, said:

By working together as a community, Pollinator Promise is about inspiring others to give hungry and homeless bees food and shelter. Each small individual change adds up to make a big difference to

pollinators and people.

Friends of the Earth Bee Cause campaigner, Paul de Zylva, said:

This year's Bees' Needs Champions show how anyone anywhere can help our bees and other vital pollinators not just to survive but to thrive.

The ten year [National Pollinator Strategy](#) is now in its fourth year and relies on action by businesses, community groups, farmers, land owners and local councils to improve conditions for pollinators. Doing so is essential to restore nature across the nation.

With winter fast approaching, bees need our help more than ever to provide them with the food and shelter they need to survive the cold.

Everyone can follow our three top tips on how we can all help pollinators this winter. You do not have to be an expert gardener to make a difference: from installing urban window boxes to planting the right bulbs, everyone can play their part to ensure bees have food and a home.

- Plant flowers, shrubs and trees that thrive in winter. The evergreen mahonia is excellent winter food for bees, while the pendant bells of winter flowering clematis can give pollinators a sugary energy boost. Ivy plants are also an ideal source of food for bees in late autumn – avoid cutting them down.
- Leave suitable places for hibernation undisturbed. Letting areas of a lawn grow long until the spring can provide a hibernation home while cool, north-facing banks are ideal places for bees to burrow. The hollow tubes of dead stems of plants in borders can also serve as a great nesting spot.
- Planting early flowering bulbs like crocus, primrose, snowdrop or coltsfoot that flower in February and March to help support bees and pollinators looking for an early feed. Winter is also the perfect time to plant bee-friendly trees, such as acacia, blackthorn and hazel.

[Press release: Lorry driver with foot on dashboard among 4,000 caught by unmarked HGV cab](#)

The driver, stopped by Humberside Police, was travelling from the M18 onto the M62 near Goole.

The footage is [available to watch at](#)

Another driver pulled over by Devon and Cornwall Police was found to have sent 10 replies to 10 texts within one hour; a driver in Surrey was seen trying to put toothpaste on a toothbrush; and a driver in the East Midlands was spotted steering with his knees while he ate his lunch and used his mobile phone.

The offenders were among more than 4,000 dangerous drivers on England's roads caught by a single unmarked HGV cab over the past two years.

Latest statistics show that mobile phone use is a factor in an average of two deaths on the roads every month, with 124 people losing their lives over the past 5 years and 521 suffering a serious injury.

Richard Leonard, Highways England's Head of Road Safety, said:

The HGV cab, which is funded by Highways England, has been patrolling motorways and major A roads over the past couple of years with the aim of improving road safety.

We've found that the vast majority of drivers are sensible behind the wheel but a few have got into bad habits, or are simply ignoring the law and putting themselves and others at risk.

It's shocking that around two thirds of the drivers that were stopped were using their phones when the statistics show that mobile phone use contributes to two deaths every month on the roads.

The footage of the driver with his foot up on the dashboard is particularly alarming, and I dread to think what would have happened if he had needed to brake suddenly. We will continue to use the cab to tackle deaths and serious injuries and to encourage people to improve how they drive.

The elevated position of the cab allows police officers to film unsafe driving behaviour by pulling up alongside vehicles on motorways and major A roads. Drivers are then pulled over by police cars following behind.

Nearly two thirds of the drivers who were stopped were illegally using a mobile phone while driving, putting themselves and others at risk.

National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Roads Policing, Chief Constable Anthony Bangham said:

Police forces are committed to keeping our roads safe and partnership with Highways England is absolutely crucial for that, as we can see from the thousands of offences detected by the HGV cab. Together with targeted local action by police officers, this

has become an important element of our intelligence-led operations against dangerous driving.

Driving whilst distracted is completely unacceptable and police are also making use of the tougher new penalties to stop this dangerous behaviour by ensuring that offenders face the full weight of law.

People have to think about the consequences of their actions – a moment's distraction can change innocent lives. It is never a risk worth taking.

In total, 28 police forces have taken part in the HGV cab safety initiative since it began in April 2015, pulling over 4,176 drivers in relation to 5,039 offences.

Officers gave verbal advice to 388 drivers, issued 838 fixed or graduated penalty notices, and filed 3,318 traffic offence reports – usually requiring attendance at a driver education course. There were also 113 prosecutions for more serious offences.

Reasons for stopping drivers included:

- using mobile phones – 2,508
- not wearing seatbelts – 901
- not in proper control of vehicles – 253
- speeding – 249

Earlier this year, the government doubled the penalty for drivers caught using their phones at the wheel. Motorists now receive 6 points on their licence and a £200 fine – up from the previous 3 points and £100 fine.

A new THINK! road safety video was also launched last month, directed by the team behind the video for Pharrell Williams's hit song Happy, to highlight the dangers of using your phone while driving.

It uses innovative filming, is shot in the style of a music video with an edgy soundtrack from celebrated musician Aphex Twin, and includes numerous pink kittens to highlight how much drivers miss if they are distracted by looking at their handheld phone.

The video is [available to watch at](#)

More details about the law on mobile phone use are available the [Using mobile phones when driving page](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[News story: Innovate 2017: take part online](#)

[Innovate 2017](#) is happening on 8 and 9 November 2017 at the [National Exhibition Centre](#) (NEC) in Birmingham – and you can follow the event at work or from home.

The focus is on UK innovation's role in tackling some of the biggest global challenges. You can learn about what these challenges mean for individuals, businesses and government, through our social media channels, alongside the opportunities for entrepreneurs to come up with their own solutions.

Keep up with the action

During the 2 days we'll be hosting a number of live video interviews on Facebook.

We will be speaking with some of the UK's top innovators across various sectors and industries, including the winners of the 2 awards that will be handed out. These are the innovation in design award, voted for by Innovate UK colleagues, and the peer-to-peer award, which is voted for by those attending the event.

We'll also provide a look around the centre itself so you can experience the event from afar.

Elsbeth Finch, Indigo& and Tera Allas, McKinsey Global Institute, at Innovate 2016.

Have your say

As well as Facebook, there's the opportunity to get involved in 2 of the panel debates, which will be streaming live on Twitter. You'll be able to watch the debate and tweet any questions on the same screen. We'll be putting the best ones to the speakers to answer.

Automating the world – 2:30pm on 8 November 2017

Are robots really going to take over jobs? And how do you manage this as a business? The session will explore automation and the fourth industrial

revolution, looking at the benefits – and potential downsides – of an increased use of data and machine autonomy.

Debating the topic are:

Securing the cyber world – 9:45am on 9 November 2017

The interconnectedness of the world makes the prospect of a cyber war very real. Are our connections and transactions really secure? How can we prepare for the next cyber attack? This session, which features a former hacker, will look at tackling these problems.

Debating the topic are:

Still time to attend in person

If you want to attend in person there's still time to register. Tickets are available now and will be on the day as well. It costs £150 for a one day ticket or £199 for both days.

Innovate 2016 highlights

[Innovate 2016 highlights](#)

[News story: New Government Envoy for the Year of Engineering announced](#)

Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling has welcomed the appointment of Stephen Metcalfe MP as the new Government Envoy for the Year of Engineering – the campaign that will see government join forces with industry to give thousands of young people direct and inspiring experiences of engineering throughout 2018.

Formerly Chairman of the Science and Technology Select Committee, Mr Metcalfe will act as an advisor for the campaign, engaging with industry and government on tackling the engineering skills gap and widening the pool of young people who enter the profession. The industry is facing a shortfall of 20,000 engineering graduates a year and a lack of diversity – the workforce is 91% male and 94% white.

Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling said:

Engineering is one of the most productive sectors in our economy, but a lack of graduates entering the profession is damaging growth. With major investment being made in infrastructure and new

technologies that aim to improve the way we travel, work and live, it's crucial to the nation's success that more people join the profession.

That's why I'm delighted that Stephen Metcalfe has accepted the role of Government Envoy for the Year of Engineering. This year-long campaign is our opportunity to encourage young people from all backgrounds to see the creativity, opportunity and value of engineering. I know our new envoy will bring knowledge, experience and commitment to the role, engaging with government colleagues and industry to ensure that the campaign reaches young people, their parents and their teachers in all parts of the UK.

Stephen Metcalfe MP said:

When I was asked to take on this important role I had no hesitation in accepting.

Growing the interest in, and awareness of engineering and careers within the sector is vital to inspiring the next generation of engineers and ensuring our future economic success.

Engineering has the ability to tackle some of the great challenges the country and the world faces while also providing well paid and rewarding careers.

I hope our combined efforts in 2018 will help us engineer a better, brighter future for all.

The Year of Engineering launches in January 2018. Throughout the year the government will work with hundreds of industry partners to bring young people, their parents and their teachers face to face with engineering activities, events and role models.

To find out more, visit the [Year of Engineering partner website](#) or follow the [Year of Engineering campaign on Twitter](#).

Speech: Getting ready for the automated car revolution

Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for that welcome.

I'm delighted to join you for today's (6 November 2017) conference.

To have this chance to talk about how we're getting ready for automated vehicles.

And what they mean for you and your businesses.

You may have seen over the weekend – hundreds of magnificent old cars taking part in the world's longest running motorsport event.

The annual London to Brighton Veteran Car Run.

They were continuing a tradition which goes all the way back to 1896.

The year of the first London to Brighton.

Which was known as the Emancipation Run.

Because it celebrated a recent increase in the speed limit from 4 miles per hour (mph) to an eye-watering 14 mph.

We tend look back on those early motoring years with nostalgia.

Pioneering manufacturers like Daimler and Panhard producing cars for an enterprising and extremely rich clientele.

But 1896 was a landmark motoring year for less romantic reasons too.

It was the year in which a London woman became the first recorded pedestrian to be killed by a car.

When she stepped off a curb and was hit by a gas powered vehicle, driven by a certain Arthur Edsall.

There was no precedent for such an accident.

So Edsall was released without charge.

And the coroner was quoted as saying he hoped such a fatality would never happen again.

Of course it didn't take long to realise that these new horseless carriages were not just temperamental to drive.

They were also dangerous – for a society wholly unprepared for their arrival.

So perhaps it's not surprising that 1896 was also the year when the first UK car insurance policy was sold.

Details of those early policies are long lost.

But the service they provided was fundamental.

To establishing a framework that protected the victims of accidents, and

focused attention on road safety.

But that also made car ownership viable, and ultimately allowed the market to grow.

With all the benefits of driving that we take for granted today.

Since then, of course, motor insurance has grown into a massive industry.

An industry that's innovated in response to changing technology.

Changing legislation.

And changing driving conditions.

But despite this progress, we've seen nothing in our lifetimes that can compare with the motoring revolution that's just around the corner.

A revolution that will transform the way we travel.

The way we buy, run and power our cars.

And the way we insure them.

The autonomous, ultra-low emission vehicles that are in development now will be as different to today's family saloons as those early vehicles which participated in the first London to Brighton run.

They represent an unprecedented leap forward in the history of the automobile.

So much so that future generations will see 20th century motoring with a driver at the wheel controlling a vehicle powered by an internal combustion engine as merely a quaint stepping stone on the journey to cleaner, fully autonomous and more efficient road transport.

The potential benefits of these new technologies for human mobility – and for wider society – are tremendously exciting.

Many who can't currently drive will be able to take to the road.

Elderly people.

Or people with disabilities which prevent them from travelling today.

They'll discover a new sense of freedom and independence.

And there is also the potential for us to make much more efficient use of the road network.

There are currently 6 cars for every 10 people in the UK.

But they are only used about 3% of the time.

Connected and autonomous taxis could deliver the same number of trips with just 10% of the vehicles, according to one recent study.

An autonomous car fleet could reduce delays by 40% on the strategic road network, and 30% in urban areas.

But just as importantly, there are huge safety implications.

Self-driving cars should make road travel far safer.

By eliminating the biggest contributory factor to accidents today – human error.

Which in 2016, was responsible for over 85% of all reported UK road incidents.

And these benefits are coming soon.

Sooner than most people expect.

In fact, I expect the first self-driving cars to reach the market – and to be used on UK roads – by 2021.

The government is already taking steps to make this happen and consulting with industry partners for their views.

Never before have we experienced such a profound change in motoring technology in such a short space of time.

And there are major opportunities in this fast emerging market for those who are best prepared.

Exports of low emission vehicles are already worth £2.5 billion to our economy.

But it is estimated that the market for autonomous vehicles could be worth £28 billion to the UK by 2035.

That's why we are so committed to becoming a global leader in the design, development and use of autonomous vehicles.

The UK code of practice for testing automated vehicles on public roads is recognised as one of the most open in the world.

Leading manufacturers like Nissan and Volvo have already announced test programmes in the UK.

And to support further growth, we're investing £100 million in R&D – match-funded by industry – across more than 50 collaborative projects.

Such as Pathfinder pods in Milton Keynes.

We're also investing £100 million – again match-funded by the industry – to provide a comprehensive range of virtual, yet real-world testing environments

for developers and investors to use.

The scheme will be co-ordinated through MERIDIAN.

A new [government-backed and industry-led hub](#).

To co-ordinate and promote connected and autonomous vehicle technology in the UK.

In October we announced the winners of a £51 million government competition to develop self-driving car testing infrastructure.

Including new facilities at 2 of the motor industry's biggest proving grounds.

And our third open R&D funding competition closed just a couple of weeks ago.

Meanwhile colleagues at the [Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles](#) recently attended the Intelligent Transport Systems World Congress in Montreal.

Where they were busy explaining why we're the leading country for the research and testing of new autonomous technologies.

And the 'go to' location for global investors in this field.

So we're making real progress.

Preparing the UK for change.

Though we can't be complacent.

That's what the [Automated and Electric Vehicles Bill](#) is all about.

Keeping ahead of the curve.

The bill's making smooth process through Parliament.

And I'm sure that will continue through to Royal Assent.

As you know, one of the key objectives of the bill is to set the legislative groundwork for automated vehicle insurance.

We have worked very closely with the insurance industry to get it right.

So I'd particularly like to thank the ABI and its members today for the support we've received.

The measures in the bill will help us provide certainty to the insurance industry – and clarity to the public – about the changes ahead.

Automated vehicles will make collisions rarer.

But when cases do come to market, our current compulsory insurance framework

might not fully protect the people and businesses involved.

As things stand, they may not be covered for collisions caused by autonomous vehicles, because only the driver's use of the vehicle is insured.

Victims might have to take vehicle manufacturers to court, which would be time consuming and expensive, undermining the quick and easy access to compensation that is a cornerstone of our insurance system.

If we fail to address this beforehand, we risk jeopardizing consumer protection, and undermining the competitiveness of our automotive industry.

Having consulted widely, we are creating a new compulsory insurance framework that covers motorists when they are driving, and when the driver has legitimately handed control to the vehicle.

This will ensure that victims have quick and easy access to compensation.

And that insurers can recover costs from the liable party, which in the majority of cases is anticipated to be the manufacturer.

It will allow consumers to buy insurance in the same way they do today.

And in turn, it could also reduce premiums.

One of the UK's largest insurers has said that "as well as making our roads safer, insurance premiums are based on the cost of claims and therefore we expect substantially reduced premiums to follow."

So automated vehicles, introduced alongside the effective insurance framework proposed in this bill, could deliver significant financial and safety benefits for ordinary road users.

We have already had many productive debates when these measures were included in the previous Vehicle Technology and Aviation Bill.

Changes have been made to the current bill that take some of those concerns into account.

However, we know that there are still wider issues to be discussed.

Issues that can't be settled until automated vehicle technology has evolved further.

Since we do not yet know how the technology will fully work, regulating early could diminish the benefits we want to achieve.

It is imperative that we do not over regulate – or worse, regulate badly – while the technology is still developing.

This could potentially result in regulation that is unsafe for the public.

Or compromise the UK's position in the market.

There are a number of important conversations about regulations taking place at an international level, and it would not be in UK interests to act unilaterally before decisions have been made.

So, our proposed regulatory programme will allow us be flexible and agile in response to future developments.

On the question of data handling.

This is clearly a matter for vehicle manufacturers and service providers.

There is a regulatory framework currently within the Data Protection Act.

But research projects will help provide evidence of how data should be recorded and shared.

Where we see barriers, we will act to remove them in a pragmatic manner.

Where necessary, we will help lead international negotiations.

As we are doing at the moment on harmonising guidelines, standards and regulation on cyber security for the global automotive industry.

So to sum up.

We are well positioned not just to follow changes in motoring technology over the next couple of decades.

But to lead them.

And part of our preparation is to make sure our regulatory framework is ready for the arrival of driverless vehicles.

Just as we saw at the dawn of motoring in the late 19th century, the success of tomorrow's cutting edge automotive industry will depend on an effective and affordable insurance framework.

Once again, insurance will be the enabler that helps the vehicle market to grow.

So millions more people can enjoy the benefits of motoring.

So we can reduce congestion and harmful vehicle emissions.

And so we can look forward to significantly safer road conditions.

There's still a long way to go.

And there's much about the technology we don't yet know .

But I can promise you that we will continue to work closely with you.

To secure a motor insurance framework that is fit for the future.

Not just for consumers.

And for the car industry.

But for you and your businesses too.

Thank you.