

# [News story: UK takes world stage in fight against marine plastic](#)

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey has set out how the UK is taking action to tackle marine litter and protect oceans from the effects of climate change at today's 'Our Ocean' conference in Malta.

Speaking in front of heads of state, ministers and NGOs from around the world, the Environment Minister pledged her support to help small island developing states with marine science, research and conservation projects – alongside setting out how the government is continuing the fight at home against the eight million tonnes of plastic that make their way into oceans each year.

The UK's ban on microbeads has been lauded as one of the toughest in the world and nine billion fewer plastic bags have been distributed since the government introduced a 5p charge. This week the government also issued a [call for evidence](#) on the benefits of reward and return schemes for plastic bottles in a bid to clean up our oceans.

Speaking from Malta, Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Around the world our oceans are suffering from the blight of plastic pollution and the impacts of climate change.

The UK continues to be a global leader in protecting oceans and marine life – our 5p plastic bag charge has taken nine billion bags out of circulation, our microbeads ban is one of the toughest in the world, and we are now exploring what more we can do to reduce the impact of plastic bottles.

But there is always more we can do – which is why I am meeting with my counterparts in Malta today to pledge my continued support for marine conservation and discuss how we can work together to protect our precious oceans and marine life for future generations.

The [Our Ocean Conference](#), held in Malta from 5-6 October, brings together heads of state, governments, industry and NGOs to discuss marine conservation and agree actions to protect seas and oceans around the world.

Alongside further funding under the [Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme](#) – which began in 2015 to help small island states make the most of their maritime assets and encourage sustainable economic growth – the Environment Minister also announced support for global initiatives to tackle plastic pollution.

These include joining the Global Partnership on Marine Litter – one of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals – as well as signing up to the Global

Ghost Gear Initiative, an alliance of the fishing industry, NGOs and government agencies working to solve the problem of lost and abandoned 'ghost' fishing gear that can trap sea life.

£5.2 million has also been granted to marine projects through the two most recent rounds of the Darwin Initiative and Darwin Plus grant schemes – helping to protect coral reefs, set up Marine Protected Areas, encourage sustainable fisheries and increase the resilience of coastal communities to climate change.

While in Malta, Minister Coffey also reiterated the government's commitment to creating a network of marine protected areas around the United Kingdom, alongside reaffirming £4.8 million to drive forward the creation of a 'blue belt' across the UK's Overseas Territories.

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## [Press release: 'Right Waste, Right Place' spot-checks on Thames Valley waste firms](#)

A number of businesses across Berkshire and Buckinghamshire are on notice to comply with the law on waste disposal, after a series of unannounced checks by the Environment Agency on Tuesday 3 October.

Officers visited more than 100 sites and firms across the Thames Valley, and will be following-up on 10 illegal waste sites found during the day. The owners may face prosecution. Other premises were given advice and guidance to help them meet their legal requirements.

Firms are required by law to manage waste without a threat to the environment, such as not releasing anything other than waste water into the drainage network. The surprise inspections covered the removal of hazardous items, like chemicals and car batteries. Thames Water assisted the Environment Agency on pollution checks. Companies were also checked for having the correct environmental permit for their business.

Environment Agency staff were also on hand at DIY store Wickes in Slough, to offer free waste-handling advice to hauliers and homeowners, in order to reduce fly-tipping.

Mark Tucker, Installations Team Leader for the Environment Agency in the Thames Valley, said:

The Environment Agency works with business to make sure waste ends up in the right place, and may take more formal action where we

believe a serious crime has been committed through illegal waste disposal.

Anyone who produces, carries, keeps, treats or disposes of waste has a duty of care to make sure it is managed correctly. The public can do their bit by only using a licenced waste carrier, or reporting any concerns on waste management to the Environment Agency on 0800 807060.

The 117 sites we inspected this week were under no illusion of their legal obligations on waste management. Mishandling waste, poorly-operated permitted sites and illegal waste activities can pose a threat to human health and the environment by contaminating land, polluting rivers and producing emissions from burning waste.

As well as breaking the law, illegal operations undermine the work done by legitimate firms.

Waste crime is a very serious issue for both local communities and the environment. The Environment Agency uses reports from industry and the public to build intelligence, and target those involved in organised environmental crime, and where their activities pose the greatest risk to the environment.

Handling of illegal waste can be reported anonymously to Crimestoppers, on 0800 555111. There are lots of signs that could suggest suspicious activity. These include:

- Out-of-hours activity at night, over weekends and during bank holidays
- Smoke caused by constant burning
- An increase in the number of lorries entering a site
- Waste going into a site but not coming out with increasing quantities of waste stockpiled on site
- Water pollution

The Environment Agency and local councils also investigate reports of fly-tipping.

All media enquiries: 0800 141 2743.

Or email us at [southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk).

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## **Press release: Thames Barrier to close due to high tide**

Communities are warned to be prepared for a coastal surge which is forecast today. As a precaution the Environment Agency will close the Thames Barrier

at 10am and re-open it at 4pm (5 October 2017) to reduce the risk of possible flooding in London and along the Thames catchment.

During today's closure the Thames Barrier, along with the associated gates and embankments, will be operating as part of our network of defences, protecting over 550,000 properties. The Thames Barrier is one of the largest moveable flood barriers in the world, protecting 125 square kilometres of central London.

It stretches 520 metres across the River Thames at Charlton and each gate takes 10 to 15 minutes to close (1.5 hours for total closure), and the control room is manned 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Andrew Batchelor, Thames Barrier Manager said:

We are closing the Thames Barrier to protect London from the threat of flooding due to high water levels around the time of high tides from the sea.

Practical advice on preparing for flooding can be found on [GOV.UK](http://GOV.UK) or by calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188. Communities can also follow us on Twitter at [@EnvAgencySE](https://twitter.com/EnvAgencySE) and #floodaware for the latest flood updates.

For all media enquiries please contact 0800 141 2743 or email [southeastpressofficel@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:southeastpressofficel@environment-agency.gov.uk).

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## **[Press release: New charity investigation: Chichester and District Dog Rescue Society](#)**

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has opened a new statutory inquiry into Chichester and District Dog Rescue Society, [registered charity number 255866](#). The investigation was opened on 13 September 2017.

The charity's activities include caring for and supporting stray dogs in East Hampshire and West Sussex.

In March 2017 the charity's independent examiner, in accordance with his statutory duties under the Charities Act 2011, reported anomalies in the charity's financial records. The Commission subsequently reviewed the charity's financial records and identified concerns about its financial controls.

The charity has also failed to submit its accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2016, which were due by 31 January 2017 and the accounts for 2015 are not compliant with the Statement of Recommended Practice, and have not been independently examined.

The inquiry was opened due to these serious regulatory concerns and will examine the following issues:

- the administration, governance and management of the charity by the trustees with specific regard to the extent to which the trustees have;
  - responsibly managed the charity's resources and financial affairs, in particular the adequacy of the charity's financial controls
  - adequately managed risks to the charity, its property and reputation including the risks of misappropriation and misapplication of charity funds
  - avoided or managed conflicts of interest
- the extent to which any failings or weaknesses identified in the administration of the charity during the conduct of the inquiry were a result of misconduct and/or mismanagement by the trustees

As a result of its concerns regarding the charity's financial controls, the Commission has made an order under Section 76(3)(d) to freeze the charity's bank accounts. It has also made an order under Section 76 (3)(f) of the Charities Act restricting the trustees from entering into transactions in the administration of the charity without the authority of the Commission.

The Commission stresses that opening an inquiry is not in itself a finding of wrongdoing. The purpose of an inquiry is to examine issues in detail and investigate and establish the facts so that the regulator can ascertain whether there has been misconduct and mismanagement; establish the extent of the risk to the charity's property, beneficiaries or work; decide what action needs to be taken to resolve the serious concerns, if necessary using its investigative, protective and remedial powers to do so.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were. [Reports of previous inquiries](#) by the Commission are available on GOV.UK.

The charity's details can be viewed on the Commission's [online charity search tool](#).

Ends

PR 65/17

## Notes to Editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).

3. Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to institute inquiries. The opening of an inquiry gives the Commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers.
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## [News story: Improved drug safety and stroke detection: firms get £15 million](#)

UK businesses will use funding to take on some of the biggest healthcare and agriculture challenges.

New approaches and treatments for Parkinson's disease, stroke and epilepsy and a device to improve detection of plant disease are some of the projects that will share £15 million from Innovate UK.

Among the ideas are:

- sensor-enabled emotion monitoring eyewear, which will help to identify a subset of patients that might merit further investigation for Parkinson's disease, enable remote monitoring and personalise treatment. The disease affects 30 million people worldwide, with 10,000 new cases diagnosed every year in the UK. The project team is [Emteq](#) and [University of Portsmouth](#)
- an in-field, early detection device for plant disease in soil and water that alerts farmers to the risk of infection before disease can spread and destroy an entire field. It should increase crop yields, while also allowing for evidence-based spraying to reduce the amount of pesticides in the food chain. [FungiAlert](#) is the lead
- 'liver on a chip', which is an in-vitro testing platform that will reliably replicate the liver response to toxins in genomically-diverse stem cells. It should mean 'fast failing' for drug candidates that are likely to harm the liver, improve drug safety and increase the launch rate of new drugs by 25%. [Stemnovate](#) and [ANB Sensors](#) are the project team
- a portable, low-cost system that detects the occurrence and evolution of stroke, using harmless, low-power microwaves to quickly obtain images for clinical analysis. Every year, 5 million people die and another 5 million are permanently disabled due to stroke incidents. The project team is [Medical Wireless Sensing](#) and [King's College London](#)
- a precision medicine tool, using advanced algorithms to interrogate the electrical activity of the brain and reveal susceptibility to epilepsy – a serious neurological condition that affects almost 1% of the population. It is responsible for some 1,000 deaths annually in the UK.

Neuronostics and the [University of Exeter](#) are the project team

The funding comes from Innovate UK's health and life sciences round 2.

We live in an age where the global population is growing and getting older. There is a burden of disease that requires new, better treatments and improved healthcare, as well as a demand for good quality food to help everyone live a healthy life.

The competition is designed to increase food production, quality and sustainability, and improve healthcare outcomes by developing new and novel process, products and services.

The latest round of health and life sciences with funding of up to £15 million is now open.