

England's treasured island seabird populations to be protected with new government funding

The UK government has today announced £156,000 to protect England's much-loved island seabird populations against the threat of invasive predators.

This is one of the first instances globally of a central government providing funding to protect seabird islands against these specific threats, setting the UK as a global leader for seabird island biosecurity.

The UK's islands such as Coquet Island and the Isles of Scilly are internationally important for millions of seabirds, with Coquet Island being the only breeding place in the UK for Roseate terns which are a red listed species. However, some key breeding populations are in decline due to multiple threats including invasive mammals such as stoats and mice.

The eggs and chicks of ground-nesting seabirds including puffins, razorbills, gannets, terns and European storm-petrels are particularly vulnerable, and their populations can quickly be decimated by invasive mammals.

The funding will be delivered through the AfterLIFE plan from July 2023. It will ensure existing biosecurity measures across England's seabird islands are maintained and enhanced so we can continue to protect the recovery and secure the future of important seabirds.

It will also fund new measures including:

- The employment of a full time Biosecurity Officer
- A conservation detection dog team that will train dogs to search for and indicate the presence of brown rats
- Information campaigns targeting island visitors
- Training of volunteers to support biosecurity implementation across England's seabird island Special Protection Areas
- Frequent surveillance checks

These measures will build on the Biosecurity for LIFE project, which Defra has supported since 2018 and has implemented key biosecurity measures such as surveillance checks and volunteering programmes on seabird island Special Protected Areas.

Minister for Biosecurity, Marine and Rural Affairs Lord Benyon said:

"British seabirds are part of what make our coastlines so beautiful, and it's vitally important we continue to do all we can to protect each unique species and allow them to recover and thrive.

"Defra's contribution to the AfterLIFE Plan will ensure important measures continue to safeguard our treasured seabirds against invasive mammals that

have the potential to obliterate entire populations.”

RSPB’s Seabird Recovery Officer and Biosecurity for LIFE project executive Laura Bambini said:

“The Biosecurity for LIFE project has worked with a diverse range of organisations, communities and individuals to set up critical biosecurity measures in place on England’s internationally important seabird islands. Having worked with Defra, Natural England and key stakeholders in other UK nations to secure the maintenance of these measures in the long term, we are pleased now to see the development of national island biosecurity programmes underway across the UK. This is important for building resilience in our seabird populations which are in a precarious situation due to the pressures they face at sea.”

“This announcement is significant, ahead of the UN’s CBD COP in Montreal, as it sets the UK Government as leaders in island biosecurity, in one of the very few instances globally of a government using core funds to protect seabird islands from the threat of invasive non-native mammalian predators.”

RSPB’s Principal Marine Policy Officer Kirsten Carter said:

“The islands of the UK are amazing, their relative isolation has allowed seabirds and other wildlife to thrive. But these wild and sometimes rugged places are delicate, protecting them requires constant vigilance as the precarious balance that has allowed wildlife to flourish can be easily disrupted with catastrophic consequences.”

“We have seen how even just a single inadvertently introduced predator can have a devastating effect on an island where the native species have no natural defences. This is why today’s announcement to fund the Biosecurity AfterLIFE is so important, it enables the protection of these inspiring places for future generations.”

In light of the ongoing outbreak of bird flu, conservation efforts such as AfterLIFE are vital for boosting the resilience of our vulnerable seabird populations. This work aligns with Defra’s development of an English Seabird Conservation and Recovery Plan which will assess the vulnerability of and threats to England’s seabirds and propose actions to address them, due to be published in Spring 2023.

[UK announces major new package of climate support at COP27](#)

- PM to launch major international climate package to deliver on the UK’s Glasgow legacy at COP27

- New announcements include £65.5m for green tech innovation and significant clean energy investments with Kenya and Egypt
- UK will also launch a new Forests and Climate Leaders' Partnership and confirm more than £150m for protecting rainforests and natural habitats, including the Congo Basin and Amazon
- Rishi Sunak will reaffirm the UK's steadfast commitment to supporting countries on the frontline of climate change

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will cement the UK's COP legacy with a series of announcements on energy transition, climate financing and forest and nature preservation, as he hands over the baton to Egypt at COP27 today [Monday 7th November].

The UK continues deliver on our key funding commitments, spending £11.6 billion on international climate finance. Recognising the existential threat climate change is already posing around the world – from catastrophic floods in Pakistan to drought in Somalia – the Government will commit to triple funding for climate adaptation as part of that budget, from £500m in 2019 to £1.5bn in 2025.

The Prime Minister will also host an event later today to launch the Forests and Climate Leaders' Partnership. The new group, initially comprising 20 countries, will meet twice yearly to track commitments on the landmark Forests and Land Use declaration at COP26, which aims to halt and reverse forest loss by 2030.

To support the forest agenda, the UK is committing £90m today for conservation in the Congo Basin, a vital tropical rainforest which is home to some 10,000 species of tropical plants and several endangered species, including forest elephants, chimpanzees and mountain gorillas.

The PM will also confirm £65 million in funding for the Nature, People and Climate Investment Fund, which supports indigenous and local forest communities, and new financing for Treevive, which is working to conserve and restore two million hectares of tropical forest.

As we hand over the Presidency of COP, the Government is focused in particular on partnering with the private sector to facilitate green innovation and energy transition, at home and around the world. As well as helping the drive for net zero, reducing the global demand for oil and gas cuts off the funds for Russia's brutal war machine.

In support of this, the Prime Minister will announce a further £65.5 million for the Clean Energy Innovation Facility today, which provides grants to researchers and scientists in developing countries to accelerate the development of clean technology. Since the BEIS-led fund was launched in 2019 it has supported the creation of biomass-powered refrigeration in India, prototype lithium-ion batteries in Nigeria and clean hydrogen-based fuels for steel production in Morocco, among other innovations.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is expected to tell COP27 later today:

The world came together in Glasgow with one last chance to create a plan that would limit global temperature rises to 1.5 degrees. The question today is: can we summon the collective will to deliver on those promises?

I believe we can. By honouring the pledges we made in Glasgow, we can turn our struggle against climate change into a global mission for new jobs and clean growth.

And we can bequeath our children a greener planet and a more prosperous future. That's a legacy we could be proud of.

As well as supporting innovation, the UK is working with G7 allies to provide countries with reliable, transparent sources of sustainable infrastructure financing. Ahead of an expected meeting later today between the Prime Minister and President Ruto, the UK and Kenya have reaffirmed their commitment to the UK-Kenya Strategic Partnership and agreed to progress a number of flagship green investment projects.

The projects include new and expanded solar and geothermal power plants in Kenya backed by British International Investment, UK export financing for Nairobi's ground-breaking Railway City and a major Public-private Partnership on the \$3 billion Grand High Falls Dam hydropower project led by UK firm GBM Engineering.

The UK will also confirm new financial support for Egypt's flagship COP27 initiative, the 'Nexus on Food, Water and Energy'. The funding will develop projects including solar parks and energy storage innovations, and is expected to mobilise billions in private sector finance.

The Prime Minister is also expected to hold a series of bilateral meetings at COP27 today, including with French President Emmanuel Macron and Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni.

He will also attend a roundtable discussion focused on energy transition partnerships, and will deliver a national plenary statement later in the day setting out the UK's climate commitments.

PM pledges to make UK a clean energy superpower ahead of COP27

- PM to travel to Egypt to galvanise action on the climate commitments made at COP26 in Glasgow
- Rishi Sunak will pledge to speed up the transition to renewables to create new high-wage jobs, protect UK energy security and deliver on net

zero

- UK to chair a high-level meeting on forests and announce new support for climate-vulnerable countries

The Prime Minister will urge countries to deliver on the Glasgow Climate Pact and set out his intention to make the UK a clean energy superpower when he travels to COP27 in Egypt today [Sunday 6th November].

The UK has already cut carbon emissions faster than any other G7 country, with renewable sources like wind and solar now making up more than 40 percent of our energy supply – a four-fold increase on a decade ago.

Addressing COP27 tomorrow, Rishi Sunak will say that in light of the shock to the energy markets caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the UK will work with international allies to go further and faster to transition to cheaper, cleaner and safer sources of energy. We will only be able to ensure households and businesses have reliable, affordable fuel by solving the climate crisis and ensuring renewables are at the heart of our energy security.

There are already around 430,000 jobs in low carbon businesses and their supply chains across the country, supported by £30 billion in government support for the Green Industrial Revolution in the last 18 months. The transition to renewables will create more high wage, high skill jobs across the UK in the industries of the future.

As the UK hands over the presidency to Egypt, Rishi Sunak will urge leaders gathering in Sharm el-Sheikh not to backslide on the promise of COP26, where countries came together to sign the landmark Glasgow Climate Pact.

The Prime Minister will hold meetings with fellow world leaders to discuss new partnerships on energy security, green technology and environmental protection, and is expected to announce further funding for conservation in threatened tropical rainforests and support for countries on the frontline of climate change.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said:

When the world came together in Glasgow last year, nations agreed an historic roadmap for preventing catastrophic global warming. As I travel to COP27 in Egypt today, it is more important than ever that we deliver on those pledges.

Fighting climate change is not just a moral good – is it fundamental to our future prosperity and security. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and contemptible manipulation of energy prices has only reinforced the importance of ending our dependence on fossil fuels.

We need to move further and faster to transition to renewable energy, and I will ensure the UK is at the forefront of this global

movement as a clean energy superpower.

The Prime Minister is expected to chair a meeting of world leaders on forests and nature, to drive progress on the landmark pledge signed by more than 100 countries last November to halt and reverse deforestation and damaging land use by 2030.

He will also attend a roundtable on energy transition partnerships, which are utilising public and private sector funds to support low and middle-income countries like South Africa to move away from fossil fuels and grow their green economies.

UK COP President Alok Sharma is in Sharm el-Sheikh today for handover ceremony to Egypt, ahead of two weeks of intensive climate negotiations. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly will also travel to COP27 with the Prime Minister, and other ministers are expected to attend throughout the summit.

Gaia

Launched in 2013, Gaia's mission is to create the most accurate 3D map of the Universe to date.

Gaia orbits the Sun, at a distance of 1.5 million km beyond Earth's orbit, offering a clear view of the cosmos beyond.

You can see an [animation of how Gaia works from ESA](#).

[The third full dataset from Gaia was released in June 2022](#).

How does Gaia 'see' the Universe?

Gaia has two optical telescopes that work with three science instruments, it repeatedly scans the sky to precisely determine the location of stars and their velocity.

During its five-year mission, the spacecraft spins once every six hours, sweeping the two telescopes across the entire celestial sphere. As the detectors repeatedly measure the position of each celestial object, they will detect any changes in the object's motion through space.

UK leading the way on Gaia's images

The UK has major roles in the Gaia mission, both in building the spacecraft and delivering the science. UK industry won some 80 million euros of industrial contracts to build Gaia.

UK activities now centre around the data processing for the Gaia mission.

These commitments are primarily in three areas: the photometric reductions, calibrating observed fluxes in broad band and low-dispersion spectra, where the developments are primarily carried out in Cambridge, and the implementation is in Cambridge; the pre-processing of the image data, where the development is done in Edinburgh and Leicester and the implementation at DPCB (Barcelona) and the processing of the data from the Radial Velocity Spectrometer, for which software developments and validation is done at Mullard Space Science Laboratory of University College London (MSSL), and implementation is at CNES (Toulouse).

Gaia will provide a huge census of the stars and the [Cambridge Gaia Data Processing Centre](#) will be the front line in processing Gaia's images, which will play an important role in the discovery of many thousands of transient stars and supernovae: these will be made immediately available to schools and the public for their participation in the research.

UK participation in the mission is funded by the UK Space Agency and scientists and engineers from around the UK have played key roles in the design and build of Gaia.

The UK Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) funded the early development of the project, including the set-up of the data applications centre. STFC's current support involves the UK exploitation of the scientific data to be yielded from the mission.

Timeline

- Launch date: 19 December 2013
- Data Release Milestone 1: 14 September 2016
- Data Release Milestone 2: 25 April 2018
- Data Release Milestone 3: Due in two stages [early partial release on 3 December 2020](#), final full release June 2022
- Data Release Milestone 4: Expected after 2025
- Data Release Milestone 5: Final data release provisionally planned for 2030

What have we learnt?

Gaia sent back its first test images in 2014 and sent back pictures showing a dense cluster of stars in the Large Magellanic Cloud, a satellite galaxy of our Milky Way. [Read more here.](#)

The first data release was in September 2016 and the second in 2018 lead to a revolution in how we understand the Milky Way. [Read more here.](#)

[Watch a visual representation of the comparison of images from the two data releases, 1 and 2.](#)

[And recently the second release data has helped scientists understand the Milky Ways warp and how it is caused.](#)

Early data release 3 (EDR3) will be a new public release of Gaia data, the first part of its third release, based on the 34 months of mission data. It

will cover [astrometric data \(positions, proper motions, parallaxes\)](#) and [photometric data \(magnitudes, colours\)](#) for around 1.8 billion stars.

Additional Info

Foreign Secretary at COP27 pledges new support for developing countries to deal with climate change

- Foreign Secretary travels to Egypt for COP27 climate change conference
- James Cleverly will today announce a range of investments worth over £100 million
- he will also urge international partners to speed up progress towards delivering on COP26 targets

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly is in Sharm el-Sheikh at COP27 today to call for tangible action to deliver on the commitments made at COP26 in Glasgow and support developing economies to tackle the impacts of climate change.

The Foreign Secretary will today announce a range of significant UK investments worth more than £100 million to support developing economies to respond to climate-related disasters and adapt to the impacts of climate change, delivering on targets set at COP26.

The Prime Minister is expected to make a raft of adaptation-related announcements at the conference later today, including that the UK will triple funding for adaptation programmes from £500 million in 2019 to £1.5 billion in 2025

Mr Cleverly will also argue that long-term prosperity depends on taking action on climate change and ramping up investment in renewable energy across the world, pointing to the impact of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine on the global economy.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said:

The Glasgow Climate Pact gave the world the tools to limit the rise in global temperature to 1.5 degrees and build a secure and sustainable future.

Now is the time for all countries to step up their action on climate change and deliver the tangible change needed.

The UK will continue to play a leading role in this mission. The funding we have announced will support countries which are facing

the devastating impact of climate change, to adapt effectively.

The Foreign Secretary will announce today that the UK will provide £20.7 million in Disaster Risk Financing to support countries which face climate-related disasters, helping them to afford insurance and to access reliable funding, more quickly, after a disaster.

As an example, this funding will allow the World Food Programme to insure food supplies for almost 5 million people across 23 vulnerable countries in cases of climate-related disasters, and will help small island developing states build resilience to extreme weather events.

This support is part of the [commitment made in 2021 at the UK G7 in Carbis Bay, Cornwall, to spend £120 million on Disaster Risk Financing](#).

The UK will also announce several new funding allocations to support countries to adapt to the impacts of climate change over the longer-term. The UK will spend £13 million to support vulnerable countries to adapt to climate impacts, and towards efforts to avert, minimise and address loss and damage, including through new funding for the Santiago Network, an organisation set up to support vulnerable countries to access technical assistance.

In Nigeria, the UK will provide a £95 million investment to support the development of climate-resilient agriculture programmes, for example through scaling up heat tolerant crop varieties. The funding will support more than 4 million people, including 2 million women, to increase productivity while reducing emissions.

At a meeting with his Colombian counterparts, the Foreign Secretary will also sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Colombia to renew their [Partnership for Sustainable Growth](#), deepening bilateral cooperation on climate change and increasing efforts to protect and restore nature and biodiversity in land and marine ecosystems.

Under the UK's COP Presidency, almost all developed country climate finance providers made new, forward-looking climate finance commitments, with many doubling or even quadrupling support for developing countries to take climate action.

The [Climate Finance Delivery Plan Progress Report](#) has reaffirmed that the climate finance goal will be met by developed countries by 2023 latest, with over \$500 billion mobilised over the 5-year period 2021 to 2025.

The [COP26 Outcomes report \(PDF, 37.05MB\)](#) details key achievements across the UK Presidency's 4 overarching goals of mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, finance and collaboration. Highlights from COP26 and the UK Presidency include:

- keeping 1.5 degrees alive: Over 90% of the world's GDP, up from 30% when the UK took on the COP presidency, is now covered by net zero commitments with over 153 countries putting forward new 2030 climate plans, known as nationally determined contributions

- increasing funding and launching UN work for dealing with climate impacts: record amounts of adaptation finance have been pledged to the Adaptation Fund and the Least Developed Country Fund under the UK Presidency. In addition at COP26, countries agreed to double 2019 levels of adaptation finance by 2025, the first quantified adaptation finance target
- accelerating unprecedented sectoral transitions with commitments covering the energy, coal, methane, fossil fuel financing, forests and land, and transport sectors, including the first reference to coal in a cover decision agreed by 197 Parties

Additional information

The £13 million Adaptation and Loss and Damage package includes £5 million for the Santiago Network and £4 million for Climate Risk Management including the Risk-Informed Early Action Partnership (REAP).