

# Geovation launches environmental challenge to tackle coastal pollution

Geovation, Ordnance Survey's open innovation network hub, has launched a challenge with the UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) to find a sustainable solution to tackle diffuse coastal pollution, with a prize of up to £5,000 for the winners.

As an island nation, Great Britain has a coastline of almost 20,000 miles (including the islands). The vast majority of the population also live within 100 miles of the coastline, so diffuse coastal pollution is likely to affect us all in some way.

Our coastlines are not just at risk from extreme storms, coastal erosion and sea level rise caused by climate change, but also from a multitude of diffuse pollution sources that can affect the water quality and pollute our coastal areas, which has a negative impact on the surrounding ecosystem.

Sources of diffuse pollution are often minor in isolation, but collectively can be very damaging to the environment due to the release of potential pollutants. Often driven by rainfall and how we manage land, diffuse coastal pollution can occur as a direct result of agricultural, urban and marine pollution sources.

Diffuse coastal pollution can be caused by agricultural run-off when pesticides and chemicals are lost from farming land into rivers, streams and ponds, as with urban areas due to poorly plumbed drainage systems, untreated wastewater, septic tanks, and flooding from sewers. All of these can accumulate on the coastline and in estuaries that affect the wildlife and local residents in those areas.

The challenge will aim to address the important issue of diffuse pollution on our coastlines and look at sustainable solutions to improve water quality, but also improve efficiencies, profitability and sustainability from agriculture to the water and sewage infrastructure, as well as improving beach cleanliness and wildlife conservation as a direct result of pollution from humans and animals.

Geovation works with innovators and start-ups by providing them with access to accurate and real-time data and the expertise to address the key global, regional and local issues that affect people and the planet. For this challenge, successful applicants will have access to data from Ordnance Survey including terrain, buildings, water networks, addressing and the OS Data Hub, the most comprehensive and accurate view of GB's landscape. This will be complimented by data from the UK Hydrographic Office, the Met Office and the British Geological Survey to identify and find viable solutions to protect our 20,000 miles of coastline in GB.

To date, Geovation has supported over 130 start-ups, who have gone on to

raise more than £116m in funding and create over 1700 jobs. Geovation has supported numerous sustainably focused start-ups including Refill, an organisation that helps people find places to eat, drink and shop with less waste, and Pava, who aim to simplify electric vehicle charging and enable more people to drive EVs.

Carly Morris, Head of Geovation, said: "The coastal challenge is a great way to inspire and drive collaboration using geospatial, maritime and meteorological data so that innovators, with the support from our Geovation community, can devise sustainable solutions in order to tackle critical environmental issues.

"The environmental impact of diffuse pollution is ever more apparent in the UK and we hope that through the challenge we can get closer to finding sustainable solutions that can deliver change and make a positive impact on the future of our coasts."

Mark Casey, Head of Research, Design and Innovation at the UK Hydrographic Office, said: "We're proud to launch this challenge with our partners at Geovation. Diffuse coastal pollution is a hugely challenging issue for marine ecosystems, so it's vital that we find sustainable and long-term solutions. Collaboration and partnerships are some of the best ways to generate real change and to find inventive and novel solutions to challenges in the marine environment, and that's why we are pleased to support participants with our world-leading marine data sets and expertise."

To find out more information visit:

<https://geovation.uk/diffuse-coastal-pollution-challenge/>

---

## [Fraudulent property development company shut down](#)

Exmount Construction Limited has been wound up by the High Court and the Official Receiver has been appointed liquidator of the company.

The company produced a professional-looking brochure for potential investors, which among other false and misleading information about the company's expertise, promised fixed returns of 9.12% for 3-year bonds and 10.35% on 5-year bonds.

Once victims handed over their money however, they were unable to contact the company. An Insolvency Service investigation found that between March 2018 and July 2019, around £1.1 million had been received by the company from would-be investors.

However, there was no record of any money being used for actual property

investments. Around £800,000 was identified to have been withdrawn by the company directors, or paid to other third-parties.

The directors of Exmount Construction Limited refused to co-operate with investigators or contest the winding-up petition. Judge Briggs, speaking during the winding-up hearing, concluded the company “had traded in an objectionable manner”.

Edna Okhiria, Chief Investigator at the Insolvency Service, said:

Exmount Construction Limited induced investors by providing false and misleading statements in sales and marketing material to part with substantial sums of money to invest in property bonds with the promise of generous returns. In reality, this was a scam and we urge potential investors to carry out rigorous due diligence to ensure they use their funds on legitimate investments.

The Official Receiver will now consider whether to take against the directors in relation to their conduct and management of the company.

## **Notes to editors**

Exmount Construction Limited – company registration number 08600415 – was incorporated on 8 July 2013.

All public enquiries concerning the affairs of the companies should be made to: The Official Receiver, Public Interest Unit, 16th Floor, 1 Westfield Avenue, Stratford, London, E20 1HZ. Telephone: 0300 678 0015 Email: [piu.or@insolvency.gov.uk](mailto:piu.or@insolvency.gov.uk).

The petition was presented on 10 September 2021 by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Official Receiver was appointed as liquidator on the making of the winding up order on 02 November 2021.

Company Investigations, part of the Insolvency Service, uses powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). [Further information about live company investigations is available here.](#)

[Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is available here.](#)

## **Contact Press Office**

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

---

# First ever Government Cyber Security Strategy to step up Britain's defence and resilience

- First ever Government Cyber Security Strategy launched today, to further protect public services people rely on.
- The public will be able to contribute to this effort by reporting cyber incidents or weaknesses with digital services.
- New Cyber Coordination Centre to be established, which will transform how data and cyber intelligence is shared, as Steve Barclay warns of ever growing cyber threat following a string of attacks.

Britain's public services will be strengthened to further protect them from the risk of being shut down by hostile cyber threats, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Steve Barclay will say today.

The minister will outline the cyber threat that government and wider public sector systems face in a speech today, as he launches the first ever Government Cyber Security Strategy.

In the speech in central London, Mr Barclay will say that Britain is now the third most targeted country in the world in cyberspace from hostile states.

The new strategy will be backed by £37.8 million invested to help local authorities boost their cyber resilience – protecting the essential services and data on which citizens rely on including housing benefit, voter registration, electoral management, school grants and the provision of social care.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Steve Barclay said:

Our public services are precious and without them individuals can't access the support that they rely on.

If we want people to continue to access their pensions online, social care support from local government or health services, we need to step up our cyber defences.

The cyber threat is clear and growing. But government is acting – investing over £2 billion in cyber, retiring legacy IT systems and stepping up our skills and coordination.

The new strategy outlines how central government and the public sector will continue to ensure that public services can function in the face of growing cyber threats. It will step up the country's cyber resilience by better

sharing data, expertise and capabilities to allow government to 'Defend As One', meaning that government cyber defence is far greater than the sum of its parts.

Of the 777 incidents managed by the National Cyber Security Centre between September 2020 and August 2021, around 40% were aimed at the public sector. In 2020, both Redcar & Cleveland and Hackney Councils were hit by ransomware attacks impacting council tax, benefits and housing waiting lists. Gloucester City Council was then the subject of a further cyber attack in 2021.

Members of the public will also be able to contribute to the effort, with a new vulnerability reporting service allowing individuals to report weaknesses in digital services.

The strategy will make core government functions, such as the delivery of essential public services, more resilient than ever before to cyber attack from malicious actors.

It follows the recent publication of the National Cyber Security Strategy, which called on all parts of society to play their part in reinforcing the UK's economic strengths in cyberspace, through more diversity in the workforce, levelling up the cyber sector across all UK regions, expanding offensive and defensive cyber capabilities and prioritising cyber security in the workplace, boardrooms and digital supply chains.

Key announcements in the strategy include:

- Establishing a new Government Cyber Coordination Centre (GCCC), to better coordinate cyber security efforts across the public sector. Building on successful private sector models, such as the Financial Sector Cyber Collaboration Centre, the GCCC will rapidly identify, investigate and coordinate the government's response to attacks on public sector systems. The centre will be based in the Cabinet Office and will ensure that data is rapidly shared, allowing us to 'Defend As One'.
- A new cross-government vulnerability reporting service, which will allow security researchers and members of the public to easily report issues they identify with public sector digital services. This will enable organisations to more quickly fix any issues identified.
- A new, more detailed assurance regime for the whole of government, which will include robust assessment of departmental plans and vulnerabilities. This will give central government a more detailed picture of government's cyber health for the first time.
- £37.8 million invested into local authorities for cyber resilience – protecting the essential services and data on which citizens rely on including housing benefit, voter registration, electoral management, school grants and the provision of social care.
- An innovative project to reduce government risk through culture change, in partnership with small businesses and academia.
- Stepped up work to understand the growing risk from the supply chains of commercially provided products in government systems, ensuring security is a key part of procurement and working with industry on cyber

vulnerabilities.

Government Chief Security Officer, Vincent Devine said:

We need this bold and ambitious strategy to ensure that government's critical functions are significantly hardened to cyber attacks.

The strategy is centred around two core pillars, the first focussing on building a strong foundation of organisational cyber security resilience; and the second aimed at allowing government to 'defend as one', harnessing the value of sharing data, expertise and capabilities.

---

## [CMA action secures improvements from leading PCR testing provider](#)

- Dante Labs to ensure that all refunds due to PCR test customers have been paid.
- Latest PCR testing provider to improve its practices following CMA investigation.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has secured formal commitments – known as undertakings – from Dante Labs. The firm will complete its review of complaints from the summer and ensure people have received refunds if they tried to exercise their cancellations rights or if their test kits or results were provided late. Dante Labs has already refunded thousands of customers and, under the terms of the undertakings, any outstanding refunds must be paid within 21 days.

The commitments secured by the CMA also oblige Dante Labs to strengthen the protections for customers in its terms and conditions, improve customer service and provide clearer product information. The company has pledged to:

- Advertise clear information about the services it provides, including the timeframes expected for test results to be delivered.
- Ensure customers know their rights for cancellations and refunds.
- Maintain a proper customer service system, which includes responding to complaints and queries in a helpful and timely way.
- Provide the CMA with an update report in 3 months on its progress implementing all changes.

The CMA launched its [investigation into Dante Labs](#) in September 2021. This followed complaints that the firm had failed to provide test kits and results in a timely manner or at all; had failed to respond to customer complaints;

and had refused to issue refunds where they were due.

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive at the CMA, said:

No PCR testing firm is exempt from the rules and our action to secure these refunds and other changes shows that we will not tolerate poor business practices.

While travel rules to the UK may have changed, those people who still require PCR tests to travel abroad shouldn't have to waste money on late results or tests that don't arrive.

It is crucial that all PCR providers treat people fairly, being clear on price and timings and providing refunds where they are due.

The investigation into Dante Labs is part of a wider programme of work by the CMA to protect consumers buying PCR tests. In August 2021, the CMA published an [open letter to PCR providers](#) outlining how they should comply with consumer law.

The CMA has also sent letters to 25 PCR test providers, warning them to review their terms and conditions – and other practices – or risk enforcement action. This recently resulted in [changes being secured from major PCR test provider Radox](#). The CMA currently has a [formal investigation open into another PCR test provider, Expert Medicals](#), and will provide an update in due course.

In addition, the CMA has provided [advice to the UK government on ways to make the PCR testing market work better for consumers](#). The recommendations included improving the basic standards to qualify for inclusion and remain on the GOV.UK list; monitoring providers on this list and swiftly removing, and sanctioning, those firms that don't meet these standards; and adding information to enable consumers to compare providers properly and find the best deals for them.

Further information can be found on the [CMA rapid review of PCR testing for travel page](#) and the [PCR travel tests enforcement action page](#). The CMA is also monitoring the emerging private lateral flow testing market for international travellers.

#### Notes to Editors

1. Dante Labs is a company comprising Dante Labs S.r.l. and Dante Labs Inc.
2. If customers have not been contacted by Dante Labs and believe they are [eligible for a refund they can contact them here](#).
3. These undertakings have been provided to the CMA voluntarily and without any admission of wrongdoing or liability. It should not be assumed that the law has been breached – only a court can decide whether a breach has occurred.
4. For media queries, please contact the press office via [press@cma.gov.uk](mailto:press@cma.gov.uk)

or on 020 3738 6460.

---

## [UK signals West African expansion at Africa Investment Conference](#)

- UK exporters gain foothold in West African region, which accounts for over one-quarter of Africa's GDP
- Demand for UK products and services expands in West Africa, with deals to build hospitals, roads and bridges
- UK government export finance support at its highest in decades in the region, including a record deal worth more than £200 million in Cote D'Ivoire

UK Export Finance has released new data today showing it provided over £500 million worth of support for projects in West Africa throughout 2021, the most in over two decades.

At last week's [Africa Investment Conference](#) (20 January), the [Prime Minister said](#) the UK is already one of Africa's biggest commercial partners but we are "determined to do much more – our shared task must be to ensure that Africa prospers from the green industrial revolution."

The Conference is an annual showcase event, designed to partner investment projects in Africa with British investors. Over 3000 delegates took part this year, boosting trade and investment ties between the UK and the continent.

The government is also mobilising support from its export credit agency, UKEF, to boost exports to Africa – it provided support worth £2.3 billion in the past year, more than trebling the amount provided in 2018-19.

In West Africa this has been deployed to a range of vital infrastructure projects, helping to build major roads and bridges as well as providing medical and IT equipment, design services and environmental and social work.

The region provides a unique opportunity for UK exporters as West Africa has experienced a surge in economic growth since the early 1990s. [Research shows](#) that since 2000 its collective GDP has risen from \$105 billion to more than \$659 billion in 2020.

UKEF has capacity to provide further support for UK trade in West Africa, with up to £3 billion available in Senegal, £2 billion in Cote D'Ivoire, and up to £2 billion in Nigeria.

**Minister for Investment, Gerry Grimstone, said:**

We want more British firms to sell to the world, taking advantage



of new opportunities that present themselves in growing markets like this. The potential is huge. This government has the finance available to back British firms going global in West Africa, supporting growth and development in the region and helping communities and local economies to thrive.

Examples of successful investments include an over £40 million UKEF guarantee for Gloucestershire firm Mabey Bridge to build 87 emergency bridges used to strengthen flood defences in Ghana, supporting countries suffering from the effects of climate change.

In 2021, UKEF also signed its largest-ever deal in the region worth over £200 million to support the construction of six hospitals, with support from UK suppliers, creating jobs in the UK and improving health outcomes in the Côte d'Ivoire.

### **About UK Export Finance**

[UK Export Finance](#) is the UK's export credit agency and a government department, working along-side the Department for International Trade as an integral part of its strategy and operations.

Established in 1919, it exists to ensure that no viable UK export should fail for a lack of finance from the private market. It provides finance and insurance to help exporters win, fulfil and get paid for export contracts.

### **UKEF in Africa**

UK Export Finance has billions of pounds in capacity to support projects in African markets sourcing from the UK and can offer financing in up to 12 African currencies. It can help foreign countries access finance, loans and insurance to make their projects happen, if they commit to sourcing goods and services from the UK.

### **UKEF Country Limits/Capacity**

- UKEF's Country Limits are regularly reviewed and may be subject to change if sovereign ratings are upgraded or downgraded.
- Country Limit capacity can reduce as UKEF supports new business – please [check the website](#) for the most up-to-date position.
- UKEF also complies with the [OECD's Sustainable Lending Principles](#), which means that for some countries the amount of new business it can do with sovereign and public entities may be restricted by the IMF's and World Bank's Debt Limits Policy.

### **New projects in West Africa supported by UKEF in 2021:**

#### Ghana

- Over £120 million worth of support to expand and modernise the Kumasi Market, the largest market in West Africa visited by 800,000 people per day.

- Over £40 million in support was provided to the Ministry of Finance which enabled Gloucestershire based bridge building company Mabey Bridge to secure a contract to build and export 87 emergency bridges to areas impacted by flooding.
- UKEF support enabled Leicestershire-based construction equipment supplier Quarry Manufacturing & Supplies to secure a deal worth £1.5 million to support road construction in North Tema, Southern Ghana.
- UKEF support also enabled Northern Irish SME Tesab Engineering to win a deal worth £1 million to supply manufacturing and industrial equipment to support construction projects.

#### Cote D'Ivoire

- £236 million worth of support for the construction of six new hospitals across the country, UKEF's largest ever loan in francophone Africa.
- Support worth £105 million will support the rehabilitation and reinforcement of two existing roads, and the construction of four bridges to improve trade links with neighbouring countries Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Burkina Faso.
- UKEF support in the Ivory Coast enabled Dints International to win a contract worth over £8 million to supply the equipment needed for the construction of five high priority road networks in the Côte d'Ivoire.

#### Contact