

# [UK condemns Houthi intrusion into the US Embassy compound in Yemen and the detention of US staff](#)

News story

The UK strongly condemns the recent and continued Houthi intrusion into the US Embassy compound in Sana'a and calls for the immediate return of US staff to their families.



Following [the statement from the members of the UN Security Council](#), the UK strongly condemns the recent and continued Houthi intrusion into the US Embassy compound in Sana'a and the detention of US staff.

We call for the immediate return of US staff to their families, and for an end to the harassment and restrictions on movement of embassy staff. We urge the Houthis to withdraw immediately from the premises, and to return all seized property.

The protection and respect for diplomatic premises and staff are fundamental principles in the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. International agreements must be respected.

Published 20 November 2021

---

## [Plans unveiled to ban single-use](#)

# plastics

Polluting plastics which harm our landscapes and wildlife could be banned in England, Environment Secretary George Eustice set out today.

Single-use plastic plates, cutlery, expanded and extruded polystyrene cups and food and beverage containers could all be phased out, in the latest Government bid to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste.

According to estimates, England uses 1.1 billion single-use plates and 4.25 billion items of single-use cutlery – most of which are plastic – per year, but only 10% are recycled upon disposal. Under proposals in a 12-week public consultation, businesses and consumers will need to move towards more sustainable alternatives.

The Government is going further by also launching a separate call for evidence to address other sources of plastic pollution. This will ask stakeholders for views on tackling commonly littered plastics such as wet wipes, tobacco filters, sachets and other single-use cups.

Future policy measures that could be explored include banning plastic in these items, and mandatory labelling on packaging to help consumers dispose of these items correctly.

The Government will also examine how we can put the responsibility firmly at manufacturers' doors to make sure they are doing everything they can to tackle single-use plastics, including litter from cigarette butts.

The UK uses 2.5 billion disposable coffee cups per year, while plastic sachets are often not recycled due to their small size, which makes it hard to segregate and clean them. The Government will consider how a move to sustainable alternatives can be achieved without unfairly impacting on consumers.

Many companies are already taking action to cut this avoidable waste, with many shops already stocking alternatives to conventional plastic wipes, and today's move will urge more to do the same.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

Plastic damages our environment and destroys wildlife. This Government has waged war on unnecessary, wasteful plastics – banning the supply of plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds, while our carrier bag charge has cut consumption by 95% in the main supermarkets.

But it's time we left our throwaway culture behind once and for all. Through our world-leading Environment Act, we will reduce waste and make better use of our resources, helping us to build back greener and leave the environment in a better state than we

found it.

These new plans represent the next major step in eradicating the use of problematic plastics that pollute our natural world.

The consultation comes a week after the passage of the Environment Act which will enable tougher action on single-use plastics in England. The Act includes powers to place charges on single-use items, and the call to evidence will explore whether such a charge could be placed on single use cups or sachets to encourage a shift away from throwaway culture.

The UK is a global leader in combatting plastic waste and has already taken major steps to tackle plastic pollution, banning microbeads in rinse-off personal care products, and restricting the supply of single-use plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds.

Following the huge success of the 5p charge on single-use carrier bags, which cut consumption in the main supermarkets by 95% since 2015, we increased the minimum charge to 10p and [extended it to all retailers](#), ensuring we can take billions more bags out of circulation.

Industry is addressing plastic waste through the UK Plastics Pact, a collaboration between businesses from across the entire plastics value chain, supported by the government and coordinated by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP).

David Scott, Corporate Affairs Director at Morrisons, said:

Reducing plastic packaging is one of the top issues our customers care about. We want to help customers live their lives with less reliance on plastic. We've already banned many single use plastics across our stores – including plastic plates, cutlery and straws, and we've developed recycling systems for soft plastics.

Only this week we've announced we're building a new soft plastic recycling site here in the UK. So we welcome Defra's consultation and look forward to working with the whole of the industry on it.

Marcus Gover, CEO WRAP, said:

We welcome the consultation to expand the range of single-use plastic items to be banned in England. Eliminating problematic and unnecessary single-use plastic is essential if we are to turn the tide on plastic pollution and keep plastic out of the environment.

The UK Plastics Pact set an ambitious target to take action in this important area and its members have already eliminated problematic plastic by more than 40%. We now need regulation to follow and ensure that all businesses take steps to eliminate problematic and

unnecessary plastic.

Steve Hynd, City to Sea's Policy Manager said:

Today's announcement to ban some of the most polluting single-use plastic is hugely welcome. Almost 100,000 people signed our petition earlier this year calling on Government to take urgent action and we're pleased to see the public's concerns being taken seriously.

There is a long journey ahead in tackling plastic pollution, but this is a positive and important first step.

Despite the action taken so far on plastics, it remains widespread and its inappropriate disposal causes environmental damage. A plastic item used for a few minutes can persist in the environment for hundreds of years and endanger wildlife and habitats. When broken down into microplastics, it reaches our soils, waterways, ocean and food chains within them. Around the world, more than one million birds and over 100,000 sea mammals and turtles die every year from eating or getting tangled in plastic waste.

Through the Environment Act, the Government is bringing in a wide range of further measures to tackle plastic pollution and litter, including:

- Introducing a [Deposit Return Scheme](#) for drinks containers to recycle billions more plastic bottles and stop them being landfilled, incinerated, or littered. Through a small deposit placed on drinks products, the DRS will incentivise people to recycle;
- Our [Extended Producer Responsibility](#) scheme will mean packaging producers will be expected to cover the cost of recycling and disposing of their packaging.
- Our plans for [Consistent Recycling Collections](#) for every household and business in England will ensure more plastic is recycled.

We will also introduce a world-leading [plastic packaging tax](#) from April 2022, set at £200 per tonne, on plastic packaging which doesn't meet a minimum threshold of at least 30% recycled content. This will encourage greater use of recycled plastic, leading to increased levels of recycling and plastic waste collection, helping to tackle the problem of plastic waste and protect our environment.

Plastic pollution is a global issue and we are committed to working with international partners to tackle it. That's why the UK is co-sponsoring an ambitious resolution proposed by Peru and Rwanda to start negotiations for a new legally binding global agreement to tackle plastic pollution in the way the Paris Agreement has done for climate change and the Montreal protocol has done for ozone depletion.

---

# **PM call with President Akufo-Addo: 19 November 2021**

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to the President of Ghana Akufo-Addo this afternoon.



The Prime Minister spoke to the President of Ghana Akufo-Addo this afternoon.

The leaders discussed the strength of the UK-Ghana relationship and welcomed the opportunity for further cooperation on a range of issues.

President Akufo-Addo congratulated the Prime Minister on the success of the COP26 Summit which he said had made a real difference to efforts to tackle climate change. The leaders agreed on the importance of richer economies stepping up to help the developing world grow in a clean and sustainable way. The Prime Minister expressed his hope that the UK could work more with Ghana to this end under the Clean Green Initiative.

The Prime Minister and President Akufo-Addo discussed stability and security in north and west Africa and the current situation in Mali.

Published 19 November 2021

---

## **Nuclear Decommissioning Authority**

# [calls for applicants for its PhD bursaries](#)



NDA calls for applicants for its PhD bursaries

The £750,000 of sponsorship is part of ongoing R&D support to develop the technical skills needed for decommissioning in the future.

Around 8 proposals will be chosen from a shortlist of entries that will be reviewed by technical specialists from the Nuclear Waste and Decommissioning Research Forum (NWDRF).

Experts look for proposals that support the NDA mission to deliver safe, sustainable and publicly acceptable solutions to the challenge of decommissioning and clean-up of the UK's civil nuclear legacy.

Dr Rick Short, Research Manager at the NDA, said:

This year we're looking for proposals which tie into the NDA's key strategic themes and how they might be applied to our decommissioning challenges across our sites.

This scheme is key in ensuring we have the key skills and capabilities which support decommissioning over future generations. We're looking forward to seeing the proposals.

Applicants have until 15:00 on Wednesday 22nd December 2021 to submit their proposals. The winning entries will be chosen by April 2022 with a view to the projects starting in September.

[Find out more or apply](#)

Published 19 November 2021

Last updated 19 November 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 19 November 2021

Link inserted

2. 19 November 2021

First published.

---

## [Thames Water fined £4 million after 30 hour waterfall of sewage discharge](#)

Thames Water Utilities Limited has been fined £4 million for discharging an estimated half a million litres of raw sewage into the Seacourt and Hinksey streams in Oxford on 24 and 25 July 2016. The water company has also been ordered to pay the prosecution costs in the sum of £90,713.

The discharge lasted approximately 30 hours and flowed for at least 3.5 kilometres along the streams, through a pub garden and past community allotments. The Environment Agency believes it was responsible for the deaths of up to 3,000 fish, including perch, chub, roach, gudgeon and bullheads, some of them up to nine years old.

The court heard how the company had failed to carry out essential maintenance to prevent blockages in a sewer that it already knew was vulnerable to blockages. It had no system in place to identify blockages or pollution occurring and instead relied, not for the first time, on observations by members of the public. It was an incident that was foreseeable and avoidable.

Judge Francis Sheridan said that this was yet another very serious breach of legislation in an area of outstanding natural beauty and that the waterfall of raw sewage was a disgraceful state of affairs. He pointed out that the environment is not ours to treat as our own and that we are living on borrowed time. Alluding to the missing manual document, he said that the failings in this case were frankly embarrassing and that this cannot happen again.

The incident was reported to the Environment Agency by canoeists who found themselves paddling in sewage amongst dead fish. Environment Agency officers attended the scene and successfully traced the pollution to its source.

Robert Davis, an attending Environment Agency senior officer, said:

It was quite horrific. Sewage pollution was bank to bank and there was a foul stench of raw sewage. When we traced the source we found a waterfall of raw sewage discharging via a pipe into the streams. Amongst the dead fish, Fisheries officers observed hundreds more on the surface, suffering and gasping for oxygen.

The court also heard that during a major sewer renewal project in 2012, Thames Water opted for a solution which saved them many millions and which critically relied upon a six monthly cleaning of the sewer to prevent the known risk of blockages. However, the company failed to comply with the permit in not having a documented programme covering the maintenance of the downstream sewer, despite being in possession of a manual which clearly outlined the requirement for maintenance and the risk of blockage and pollution if it was not carried out. Through a painstaking criminal investigation, it transpired that the water company had failed to adequately maintain this high risk section of sewer for at least 16 years.

The Environment Agency had previously issued Thames Water with two formal warnings following earlier pollution from the same discharge point due to an earlier blockage in February and March 2021.

The court was told how the water company failed to disclose highly relevant documents, including a maintenance manual, until the 11th hour and only after members of the public had brought one of them to the attention of the Environment Agency.

Robert Davis added:

This fine sends out a clear warning to the boards of all water companies – invest heavily in maintaining your sewers and don't drop the ball when it comes to carrying out that maintenance. Incidents like this are preventable and are completely unacceptable, particularly at a time when the need to protect the water environment for wildlife and people has never been greater and when public consciousness on environmental matters is so high. We'd urge anyone that sees suspected water pollution to report it to us immediately on our Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

This latest conviction brings the total amount of fines levied against Thames Water since 2017 to £32.4 million for 11 cases of water pollution across Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire.

It also follows the announcement yesterday that [the Environment Agency and Ofwat have both launched new investigations into sewage treatment works](#) after new checks led to water companies admitting that they could be releasing unpermitted sewage discharges. Any company caught breaching their permits could face a range of possible enforcement action – up to and including prosecution.