

# Geospatial Commission launches pilots to improve how data about land is used in the UK



Land is the UK's most valuable asset, worth £5.4 trillion in 2017. This finite resource faces competing demands from housing, planning, infrastructure, farming, food production, carbon sequestration, flood protection, habitat creation, underground mineral and geothermal resources.

Demands on land will increase with the need to reach target reductions in net zero greenhouse gas emissions, build more affordable and sustainable homes, and deliver over £600 billion of infrastructure investment over the next five years to Build Back Better.

The Geospatial Commission is working with its pilot area partners in Devon, West Midlands and Northern Ireland, investing £4.56 million as part of a new National Land Data Programme. The pilots will deliver a blueprint for land use data improvement priorities, evidence about how to overcome the data access challenges, and test the benefits of a common UK-wide platform for land use data.

Lord True CBE, Minister of State at the Cabinet Office, said:

To make the right choices about how we use our land, we need to ensure that the relevant data are available. The National Land Data Programme pilots will provide insights into the current data access challenges to help improve data that supports effective decision-making and contributes towards critical government priorities, including working towards net zero and housing development.

Sir Bernard Silverman, GC Chair, said:

Having recently been appointed chair of the Geospatial Commission, I am excited to see the launch of the National Land Data Programme pilots. They will be critical in delivering improved access to

better location data, one of the key commitments made in the UK Geospatial Strategy.

For more information about the year ahead, read the [Geospatial Commission Annual Plan 2021/22](#).

## Notes

1. Spending Round 2019 announced £200 million for the Shared Outcomes Fund to fund pilot projects to test innovative ways of working across the public sector, with an emphasis on thorough plans for evaluation.
2. Central departments across Whitehall are closely involved. Defra, BEIS, MHCLG, DfT and ONS all sit on the Programme Steering Board and the programme team is working to ensure policy alignment.
3. You can now [apply](#) for the opportunity to be part of the procurement for the programme's data sharing platform and external evaluation.
4. The programme will be delivered and evaluated by the end of FY 2022/23.

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1. 8 September 2021

Link to apply for the procurement for the programme's data sharing platform and external evaluation added to editors notes.

2. 31 August 2021

First published.

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## [Veterans' mental health services to receive £2.7 million boost](#)

- Additional mental health services to be rolled out to veterans through Op COURAGE
- Support will be tailored to those dealing with complex mental or physical trauma or alcohol and substance misuse
- Dedicated care co-ordinators will be appointed to reduce suicide rates

Armed Forces veterans, including those who served in Afghanistan, will benefit from additional mental health support backed by £2.7 million for Op COURAGE – the Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Service.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid has today (31 August) announced an expansion of services to support those experiencing complex mental and/or physical trauma, or alcohol and substance misuse.

Dedicated care co-ordinators will be appointed to act as a single point of contact to better support veterans with complex mental and physical trauma. They will help them to navigate the health and care system, consult with health and care professionals, with the ultimate aim of reducing suicide rates within the veteran community.

**Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:**

Our serving Armed Forces and veterans represent the very best of us, with recent events in Afghanistan yet another reminder of their dedication and sacrifice.

Op COURAGE already provides excellent support for veterans' mental health, but I know there is more we can do to get the right care and treatment to those who have given up so much to protect us.

This new funding will ensure support is in place where it is needed most, recognising the unique challenges veterans face.

This additional funding builds on the significant mental health support provided by NHS England in recognition of the unique needs of veterans and the challenges they face, including through the Veterans' Trauma Network and Op COURAGE which has already received over 16,000 referrals to date.

It is estimated 38,000 members of the Armed Forces community, including veterans, suffer from alcohol and substance misuse. The funding will ensure dedicated substance misuse services are integrated as part of Op COURAGE, making it as easy as possible to access support.

**Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:**

The campaign in Afghanistan was incredibly challenging but our personnel displayed the highest levels of bravery and professionalism whilst securing the rights and freedoms of millions.

Many of our people experienced things they will never forget, and we remain committed to supporting this veteran community through Op COURAGE. We are forever indebted to the heroics and sacrifice of our service personnel and veterans, and pledge to ensure they receive any support they need.

**Minister for Defence People and Veterans Leo Docherty said:**

This targeted increase of support will help those veterans who may be struggling, particularly in light of recent events in Afghanistan.

For those who served in Afghanistan, and for all former service personnel, mental health support is available through Op Courage.

I urge any veteran to access this specialist support.

## **Background**

If you are struggling as a result of the recent events in Afghanistan, there is support available across the United Kingdom for veterans and those affected:

- In England, veterans and their families in England can get specialist help from the NHS Op COURAGE service.
- In Wales, you can reach out to Veteran Therapists in each Local Health Board through Veteran Wales.
- In Scotland, veterans can access veteran-led mental health and welfare support through Veterans First Point, part of NHS Scotland.
- In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Veterans' Support Office links individual veterans, veterans' groups, statutory and non-statutory bodies, and charities supporting veterans.
- Anyone in the UK or overseas can also contact the Veterans' Gateway helpline on 0808 802 1212, or visit the website for advice and signposting to further support, including for families and the bereaved.

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## **DVLA's commitment to water efficiency receives UK-wide recognition**

DVLA has been recognised by the UK's leading authority on water efficiency after introducing a range of measures to discourage water waste.

The agency has been awarded the Waterwise Checkmark after engaging with its staff to promote sustainable practices and reduce water waste at its Swansea site.

The Checkmark, which is awarded by Waterwise; the UK's leading independent authority on water efficiency, highlights that a building or part of a building, has put in place technology, signage and engagement programmes to

result in water efficient behaviours.

DVLA has a history of striving for water efficiency as it follows the Greening Government Commitments, which set out targets for central government and its agencies to make reductions in consumption and waste

The agency was recognised after introducing water-saving measures, including using aeration devices to reduce water flow from taps, putting up signs across its Murrison site to help staff reduce water waste, encouraging them to contact a helpdesk to easily report any leaks or issues, and using waterless urinals. There is also advanced monitoring of water use across the estate through sub meters and web-based software

Louise White, Director of Estates and Human Resources at DVLA, said:

We are extremely proud to receive the Checkmark, which recognises the commitment our teams have shown to becoming more water efficient through numerous internal projects.

At DVLA we are dedicated to reducing our environmental impact through modernising our services and estate, and we actively encourage our staff to participate in creating a more sustainable working environment.

We believe that sustainability begins with us, and as an agency, we will continue working towards improving water efficiency and maintaining sustainable practices throughout DVLA.

On DVLA's award, Dr Nathan Richardson, Head of Policy and Strategy at Waterwise, said:

It was a pleasure to award the DVLA the Waterwise Checkmark. Their application was one of the strongest we have seen and included some excellent evidence of what is being done to save water from efficient kit to behavioural campaigns with staff at the office.

## **Notes to editors**

- DVLA was awarded in the office-based category and is among 33 businesses across the UK to receive the award, including Welsh Water and Natural Resources Wales.
  - The Waterwise Checkmark has been achieved as part of the DVLA's Sustainability Plan for 2021/22, which demonstrates how the agency and its staff will maintain a sustainable working environment and embed sustainability into its day to day operations.
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# OSCE annual security review conference: UK opening statement

Thank you, Madam Chair, thank you Ulrika. I would like to begin by adding my thanks to you, Foreign Minister Linde, your able team and the OSCE Secretariat for organising this year's [Annual Security Review Conference](#). It has been a particular challenge to get us to this important point and I and the UK are grateful to you.

The OSCE exists to make us all safe and secure. The 57 participating States here today created the OSCE together and accepted a comprehensive set of values, norms and principles that span three dimensions, including respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, non use of force and human rights and fundamental freedoms.

All are key OSCE principles we have agreed to abide by. So, when one state decides that the rules do not apply to them, we all become less safe and less secure.

Unfortunately, Russia's actions – such as their refusal to respond to Ukraine's legitimate request under Vienna Document Chapter 3 for information about Russia's extraordinary military build-up – show that they have precious little interest in the transparency and confidence building tools of the OSCE.

Furthermore, Russia's ongoing aggression towards Ukraine and violation of OSCE principles there, remains the biggest security challenge facing our region. We join the overwhelming majority of participating States in reiterating our support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, including its territorial waters.

It is in responding to this conflict where the OSCE continues to demonstrate its enduring value. We highly commend the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and its dedicated staff for their impartial, facts-based reporting. Sadly, however, the Mission is prevented from being able to truly fulfil its mandate because of systematic access restrictions imposed by the Russia-backed armed formations and because it is denied access to Crimea. We repeat our call on Russia to cease its financial and military support to armed formations in eastern Ukraine, bring restrictions on the SMM to an end, implement the Minsk agreements and end its illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastapol.

Sadly, it is not only in Ukraine where people living in the OSCE region are suffering the negative impact of conflicts and we strongly support the OSCE's work in supporting conflict affected populations and promoting conflict resolution. We highly value the work of the Personal Representative of the Chairpersonship in Office on the conflict governed by the Minsk Conference, the Minsk Group Co-Chairs, the work of the OSCE Special Representative on the

South Caucasus, the OSCE Mission to Moldova and the OSCE Special Representative for the Transnistrian Settlement Process. All are playing an important role and we are grateful to them.

The UK remains committed to our existing Conventional Arms Control and military confidence and security building measures. To be effective, all participating States must fully and faithfully implement the commitments they have undertaken. Modernisation of the Vienna Document, [supported by 45 participating States at Tirana](#), is the best, first step for those serious about increasing reciprocal transparency and reducing risk.

We again call on Russia to constructively engage in this important and long overdue task. We continue to value the Structured Dialogue as an additional, informal platform for discussion of priority security challenges and risks, and thank Spain for their continued able Chairpersonship, including for the inclusion of climate change and security in this crucial year for global efforts to address the climate challenge.

I am grateful to the Swedish Chairpersonship for putting their faith in me to continue chairing the Security Committee this year. The UK shares the importance placed by the Chair on preventing and tackling transnational organised crime, and this topic has also formed a core focus of the Security Committee's work throughout the year. I look forward to moderating tomorrow morning's session on transnational threats, which will have a specific focus on transnational organised crime. With the expertise of the invited speakers, I hope that we can use this session to build upon the discussions that we have had in the Security Committee this year.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of [OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 3/11](#) on the conflict cycle, we are looking forward to the upcoming discussion of the OSCE's conflict cycle toolbox. We hope to build on discussions at this year's conflict cycle seminar on how to achieve equal and meaningful participation of women at all levels of decision making and at all stages of the cycle. This work is critical to achieving sustainable peace.

Madam Chair, I hope our discussions over the next two days will remind us all of the value of our shared commitments. In order to successfully address key challenges and seize key opportunities we must make full use of the OSCE's platforms, instruments and institutions, engaging constructively and in good faith. It is about political will. In a consensus based organisation, political will needs to exist in all OSCE Capitals. Let me conclude by underlining the UK's strong commitment to the OSCE, and by pledging our continued support to Sweden's Chairpersonship.

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[\*\*New Tree Health pilot to protect trees\*\*](#)

## from pests and diseases

The Government is inviting land owners and managers, including farmers, to express their interest in taking part in a new Tree Health pilot designed to support action against pests and diseases affecting their trees. The pilot will first focus on ash, sweet chestnut, larch and spruce.

The three-year Tree Health pilot will be delivered by the Forestry Commission and will cover parts of the North West, West Midlands, London and the South East of England. The pilot aims to establish 100 agreements with interested land owners and managers to help deal with trees affected by a pest or disease outbreak.

The Forestry Commission will support the felling and restocking of trees as well as providing maintenance payments for restock sites. Learnings from the pilot will inform the future Tree Health scheme, being rolled out in 2024. The pilot will work alongside the existing Countryside Stewardship Woodland Tree Health grants, which will continue to be on offer until 2024 when the new Tree Health scheme will be adopted.

As the pilot will trial new elements of the future scheme only, payments made as part of the Tree Health pilot will differ to payments made as part of the existing Countryside Stewardship Tree Health grants.

Among the incentives being tested through the pilot, support will be available for diseased and infested trees outside of woodland, for roadside ash with ash dieback, and for trees affected by the spruce bark beetle (*Ips typographus*) and sweet chestnut blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*).

The UK's Chief Plant Health Officer, Prof Nicola Spence, said:

Plants and trees deliver £10.5 billion per year in social, environmental and economic benefits, from providing a safe environment for wildlife and sequestering carbon from the atmosphere, to enabling a sustainable timber industry.

I encourage eligible stakeholders to help us protect these vital national assets by submitting their expressions of interest to the Tree Health pilot.

Forestry Commission Chair, Sir William Worsley, said:

For the Tree Health pilot we envisage a genuine partnership with land owners and managers whose trees are affected by certain pests and pathogens – one that will strengthen the health of our iconic natural environment.



A healthy treescape is crucial to ensure that we leave our environment in a better state for future generations. I am calling for eligible tree owners and managers across England to submit their expressions of interest to the pilot. Together we will carefully test and refine new elements of the future Tree Health scheme, to the benefit of our precious trees and woodlands – and the wildlife which relies upon them.

The pilot delivers on the Government's commitment, set out in the Agricultural Transition Plan, to reduce the impact of tree pests and diseases. It will work with landmark plans for a renewed agricultural sector which will transform the way farmers and land managers are supported to encourage sustainable farming practices alongside profitable food production.

The Tree Health pilot supports the commitment to the 25 Year Environment Plan, the Tree Health Resilience Strategy and the UK's carbon net zero goals.

For further information about the Tree Health pilot and to submit an expressions of interest, please visit the relevant [GOV.UK page](#).